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CAPTAIN DANNY

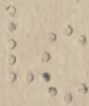
BY

WALTER CAMP

AUTHOR OF "DANNY FISTS," "JACK HALL AT YALE,"
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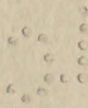
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CAPTAIN DANNY

CHAPTER I

AN UNEXPECTED BLOW.

CHRISTMAS was in the air. Every Manor Hall boy breathed it as he prepared to depart for his home to enjoy the season. Yet, despite the fact that snow was falling and that this would be a "white Christmas," there was a matter aside from the Yuletide in the mind of every boy who loved the green and white.

For two years in succession Monroe Academy had shamelessly defeated Manor Hall's baseball nine. Now the school had made up its mind that Monroe had to be stopped—not gently and kindly, but abruptly and with a thud. So even Christmas couldn't make the fellows forget that Craig, the coach, had promised to start indoor

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baseball practice as soon as they came back to school.

There were no classes to-day. Along in the afternoon the students would begin to go their separate ways toward home. At breakfast there was a merry, buoyant atmosphere about the dining hall. Fiery, red-haired Danny Phipps, the captain of the nine, went about from table to table urging his veteran players to take care of themselves.

"No ice hockey while you're away, Cross," he warned his first-baseman.

"Trust me," Cross answered. "I won't come back all banged up. I'll be fit."

The captain turned to Jerome, a pitcher. "You, too, Nick."

Jerome flushed. "Oh, I don't think it matters much about me," he said.

"Of course it matters," cried Cross. "Because he passed a few batters last season, Danny, he thinks he'll never get control. If he doesn't stop talking that way I'll walk out and let him find a new roommate."

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Jerome smiled feebly. "You wouldn't do that, Bert. I'll never be much of a pitcher. Did you see me throwing snowballs yesterday? I couldn't throw them where I wanted to for love or money."

"Snowballs aren't baseballs," Danny Phipps said sharply. "You come back here fit. Hear me?"

"Oh, I'll take care of myself," the pitcher answered. He added as an afterthought: "I always do, anyway."

Danny walked away with a frown in his eyes. He was irritated at Jerome's lack of spirit, and later he left word at Craig's lodgings that it might be well to say a few words to the fellows before they departed. As a result the coach came to the dining hall while the students were at dinner.

"Careful of the good things," he advised earnestly. "Candy and cake have ruined many a boy as an athlete. A little, perhaps, isn't bad, but none is better. I want you back here with bright eyes and good stomachs. I want you back

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here in shape to give Monroe nine innings of something to worry about."

"That's how we'll come," yelled a voice.

"There's another thing," said Craig. "Every baseball fellow knows what his record was last year. You should all improve. You are all young boys——"

"Wow!" cried a voice.

"Young men," the coach continued with a slow smile. "Is that better? At your ages improvement from season to season is the rule. So, those of you who did not play as well as you might have played last season, remember that this season you'll do better. That's all, fellows."

Danny had been staring at Jerome, and he had seen the pitcher's face take on a different look.

"That's the stuff," the captain muttered gleefully. "I'm glad I got Craig over here."

After the meal Danny went off to his quarters with Ralph Dutton, his roommate. Dutton was the nine's star catcher. A few minutes later Cross came in on them without knocking.

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"How is Jerome feeling now?" Danny demanded.

"That talk did him good," Cross answered. His tone changed. "Did any of you notice Craig?"

"Catch me noticing anybody when there's roast beef and mashed potatoes for dinner," Dutton grinned. "What was wrong with him?"

"He didn't appear to be well."

"Rats!" Ralph snapped the lock of a grip. "Didn't you hear that joke he made about young men? Did that sound as though he was sick?"

"He didn't look right," Cross insisted stubbornly. "How did he look to you, Danny?"

The captain shook his head. "I had my eyes on Jerome. What makes you think he isn't well? We'd be in tough shape without Craig."

"Rats!" Dutton scoffed. "Cross has loose ideas. Catch old Craig getting sick."

But Craig was sick. An hour later the news began to spread about the snow-piled Yard and up and down the halls of the dormitory building. Boys who departed on the 4:27 train knew

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that a doctor had been sent for. The group that left on the 6:18 knew that the doctor had arrived. At 7:45, when another trainload of Manor Hall fellows departed, the doctor was still there. The students left behind—boys who would not start for home until the morrow—tried to assure themselves that no news was good news.

Next morning Orth, the substitute catcher, spread glad tidings through the school.

"Only a cold," he said. "I saw his landlady."

"Huh!" said Danny. "I knew Craig was all right." He studied a time-table, grabbed his grip and set out on a run for the railroad station.

All the way home in the train the captain's mind kept reviewing what a friend Craig had been to him. He had come to Manor Hall a hot-headed, two-fisted little fighter, and with the nickname of Danny Fists. In a few months Craig, the patient coach, had taught him to control his fiery nature. Better still, Craig had selected him as quarterback of the school eleven. He had gone in for baseball in his freshman year, but Craig had used him only as a substitute and

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then only in the minor games. After the season the coach had said to him: "Danny, the fellow who gets riled because the pitcher slips over a strike isn't worth much to a nine, is he? He's so busy nursing his soreness that he can't concentrate on what the next pitch will be."

Danny remembered how he had digested this, and how he had come to see that the coach had been gently pointing out one of his weaknesses. So, in his sophomore year, he had fought for control of his temper in baseball just as he had fought for it in football—and the middle of the season had found him a regular. Now, a Manor Hall junior, second base was his by a veteran's right. And he was captain of the nine, too.

He had not conquered his temper in a day. Even yet it still flared up at times. But Craig never lost patience with him. Gently the coach helped him nurse his good resolutions. The night he was elected captain the man had said to him quietly: "Here's where you must watch your steps, Danny." And the boy remembered his own question: "You'll stand by me and help me,

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won't you, Craig?" And the coach's answer: "Every minute, Danny." Oh, yes; Craig had been a wonderful friend. Danny gave thanks that it was only a cold that had attacked the coach.

Mr. Phipps had installed a billiard room since Danny had gone off in September. During the Christmas holidays Danny made much use of it, and tried to explain to his mother the science of putting "English" on a ball. Either Danny's explanations were crude or else his mother was not interested, for during the second week of January Danny went back to Manor Hall with the conviction that only men were capable of grappling with big problems like football, baseball and billiards. Danny counted himself quite a man by this time.

On the train he met Don Baggs.

"What's this I hear about Craig?" the center-fielder demanded.

Danny caught his breath. "What about him?" His mind raced back suddenly to those days at school before Christmas. "He wasn't really sick that time, was he, Don?"

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Baggs shook his head hopelessly. "I don't know. I received a letter from one of the fellows who spent Christmas at school. He said that Craig hadn't come out yet, and that Dr. McDonald was going there two and three times a day."

"Two or three times a day?" Danny cried. "Why, a man's sick when a doctor comes that often."

"That's what I thought," said Baggs. "What do you think can be wrong with him?"

Danny didn't know. As soon as the train reached Manor Hall he bolted into a telephone booth, called Dr. McDonald's office, and asked how Craig was.

"Ah!" said the doctor. "Mr. Craig is convalescent. I am very glad to say he is on the road to complete recovery."

"What was the matter with him?" Danny asked.

"Pneumonia," was the answer.

Danny said a vague "Thank you," and left the booth. He found Baggs waiting.

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"Pneumonia," he said. "Thunder! That's a tough sickness, Baggs. Remember when Manning had it?"

"But he's getting better, isn't he?" the center-fielder demanded.

Danny nodded. Yes, Craig was getting better. But somehow the boy felt no elation. Pneumonia! What a miserable thing to happen to a good fellow like Craig!

Yet, by nightfall, he felt his depression passing. For one thing, every boy he met took a rosy view of the situation. Craig was getting better, wasn't he? In the end Danny, too, came to this way of thinking. After supper he plunged into a grand campus celebration. He came up the dormitory stairs with Dutton and Cross a few minutes before the ten o'clock bell.

"Say," Cross questioned, "didn't Manning have pneumonia that time he was so sick?"

Dutton nodded.

"He surely did."

"Didn't he have to go away and rest up? Suppose Dr. McDonald wants to send Craig away?"

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"Take him away from the nine for this season?" Danny demanded aghast.

"Whew!" grunted Dutton. "That would be fine, wouldn't it?"

"It would—not," said Cross.

Later, as Danny undressed for bed, he began to fret about what would happen should the nine lose Craig. Dutton, however, very sensibly refused to worry until he found something to worry about.

"Craig may be all right," he insisted.

"He may," said Danny, "but I have a hunch he isn't."

Next morning a message came to the captain from the coach:

Come to my rooms this afternoon.

It was a restless Danny who tramped across to Craig's lodgings that afternoon. In his room he had left Dutton, Cross, Baggs, Jerome, the pitcher; Talmage, the third-baseman; Chapman, the left-fielder, and Lee, the shortstop. He had

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looked back as he crossed the Yard, and they had waved to him to hurry.

The landlady let him in at the street door with a flustered air of excitement. She made Danny feel that she didn't approve of the visit—that she thought Mr. Craig should have quiet. So Danny went up the carpeted stairway on his toes. He knocked weakly at the coach's door.

"Come in, Danny," called a voice.

Danny's heart jumped. Why, that voice was just the same as it always had been. He pushed open the door and stalked into the room. His face wrinkled into an honest grin of joy. Then he saw the man, and he caught his breath sharply.

For Craig—the once powerful Craig—looked thin and gone.

"Sort of ran me down between the bases and touched me out, didn't it, Danny?" the man asked with his old, warm smile.

Danny nodded and said nothing.

"Hello!" cried the man in pretended alarm. "Do I look as poorly as that? Dr. McDonald told me I was well."

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Danny found his voice. "But—but you are better, aren't you?"

Craig laughed. "Of course I'm better. Stop worrying about me, Danny, and sit down. I want to talk to you about the nine."

Danny dropped into a chair. "Do we start indoor practice soon?" he asked.

"I'm afraid not. That shouldn't worry you. You have what is practically a team of veterans. You ought to win the Monroe series. You——"

"Hold on," Danny cried, "why do you say I'll have a good nine? Why do you leave yourself out?"

"Because," said the coach, "because I will not be with you. Dr. McDonald——"

"Oh!" said Danny. He sat with his eyes on the floor. Somehow, now that the blow had fallen, he knew that he had expected it. Yet he felt a keen pang of loss.

"H—how long will you be away?" he asked huskily.

"Five months, maybe."

"Until June?"

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"Yes."

"The—the Monroe series will be over when you come back," said Danny. He looked at Craig. The coach nodded.

"I won't be here for the series, Danny."

Suddenly, to the boy, Manor Hall began to seem lonesome and forlorn. Craig going! And somebody else in Craig's——

"Who'll be coach?" he demanded.

"The athletic committee has hired Marty Black," said Craig.

Danny's chin squared.

"Who's he?"

"He's an old-time professional player," Craig answered. His eyes searched the boy's face keenly. "And he was a good player, too, son. He stayed in the National League eleven years. He knows baseball from the fence down to the last stitch in the ball."

"I don't care what he knows," the boy cried miserably. "I'd sooner have you, Craig."

The man's face softened. "Thank you, my boy. I'm a little bit glad you feel that way. But don't

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forget this, Marty will take good care of the nine. He knows the game."

"That isn't the only thing he ought to know," Danny cried. "Does he know the rest of it?"

"Does he know what?"

"Does he know us? Does he know boys? Tell me that, Craig. Does he know boys?"

"He knows the game, Danny," said the coach gently. "That's the big thing, son."

But the captain felt that it wasn't. He had seen the Manor Hall nine beat better teams, and he had thought on those occasions that the reason was Craig. So, half an hour later when he trudged back across the Yard, he felt heartsick and sore. Marty Black! He shook his head sorrowfully. He felt that he would not give Craig's little finger for all the Marty Blacks in the world.

CHAPTER II

DANNY MEETS THE NEW COACH

DESPITE the fact that his thoughts were gloomy, Danny was too wise a campaigner and too close a student of Craig's methods to let the members of the nine see how dejected he was. He went into his room, where the crowd was gathered, with a buoyant step and with a laughing tilt to his head. Cross jumped up.

"How is he, Danny?"

"He's been sick, Bert."

Cross looked at him. "How sick, Danny?"

"Too sick," the captain answered bitterly, forgetting for the moment the part he had to play. He caught himself. "Too sick to suit any of us fellows who like him," he added.

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Cross's eyes clouded with thought. He felt that the captain wasn't telling the whole story. Talmage took up the questioning:

"What did Craig want?"

Danny's answer was an attempt at carelessness. "He wanted to tell me about Marty Black."

"Wasn't he a professional ball player?" Dutton asked with a frown.

"You bet he was," Danny cried. "He lasted for eleven years in the National League."

"Eleven—" Dutton took a step forward. "Look here, Danny, what did Craig tell you? Is Marty Black coming to Manor Hall?"

Danny nodded.

Jerome gave a short whistle. Cross walked over to the window and drummed on the glass. He looked back over his shoulder.

"Is this Black going to coach us?"

Danny forced a smile. "You bet he is. Craig says he knows——"

"Where will Craig be?" Cross interrupted.

"He's going south for his health," Danny

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answered. "Marty Black will have charge for the whole season—the Monroe series and all."

He had told them the worst. Now he watched them narrowly. They said nothing. One by one they made excuses and departed. Danny, in silence, watched them go.

For he knew how they felt. They had a feeling for Craig that was down deep in their hearts. It was faith, love, adoration. They understood their coach, and he understood them. They took the news that a former big leaguer was coming to Manor Hall with a blank lack of interest. It was not that they were prejudiced against Marty Black. They did not doubt his ability. But Craig was Craig—and without Craig they felt helpless.

Dutton remained in the room with Danny. He drew a sighing breath. And at that Danny bristled.

"Oh, cut it out, Dut," he cried. "I'm not going to have any of you fellows holding funerals when there's nobody dead. Craig says Marty

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knows baseball from the fence to the last stitch in the ball."

"But he's a big leaguer," the catcher wailed.

"Well, what of that? It ought to help us. He certainly had to know something about baseball to stay in the National League eleven years."

"But he'll come here and look down on us," Dutton cried. "All big leaguers do. They call other players bushers. They treat them contemptuously. That's what Marty Black will do."

It was on the tip of Danny's tongue to say, "Just let me see him." He held himself in check.

"Marty isn't that kind," he defended. "He knows we're green about the game. That's why we need him to coach us. Marty will be all right."

"He won't be Craig," said Dutton.

There was no denying that. Danny had an idea that if something wasn't done mighty quickly he'd find his nine completely discouraged months before it played even its first game.

By supper time the whole school knew that Craig was going away. Danny had had a feeling

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that all the fellows would be downcast. Instead, he found the school regretting Craig's loss, but at the same time secretly rejoicing in the thought that a former big leaguer was coming to them. The fact that he had been a star in his day threw an atmosphere of greatness around him. Why, even Craig had never been in the big leagues. Of course, the school would be delighted when Craig came back; but wasn't it bully to get a man like Marty Black?

Danny felt like taking a couple of the fellows and banging their heads together. That sort of reasoning seemed to him like disloyalty to Craig. But after thinking the matter over he came to the conclusion that he would force the school to help him. The students expected great things with the coming of Marty Black! All right; he'd try to inoculate the baseball squad with the same feeling.

But here he failed. The veterans of the nine could not forget all that Craig had been to them.

"Don't rush at us that way," Cross pleaded.

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"Black may make the best coach in the world. I'm not saying he won't. I hope, for the sake of the nine, that he does make good. But we're losing Craig, and we must get used to that thought, Danny, before we can throw up our hats for anybody else. Give us time."

"But," Danny insisted, "Craig says——"

"What else would Craig say?" Cross demanded bluntly.

Here was the whole game in a new light. How many of the nine thought that Craig was talking for effect when he praised Marty Black?

That afternoon Danny went over to the coach's rooms. Some of the color had come back to the man's cheeks.

"Where can I get Marty Black's record?" he asked Craig.

The coach went over to his desk and brought back a pile of old baseball records. From some the covers were gone. Danny counted the books. Eleven, one for each year Marty had spent in the big league.

"I sent for them," Craig said quietly. "I

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thought you'd be over for something like that sooner or later."

Danny had not planned to explain how the boys felt. He saw, however, that Craig understood.

"I wouldn't need these," he scowled, "if the fellows would pitch in and forget what can't be helped. Every time I try to get them going they begin to talk about how they're losing Craig. It's going to make things a whole lot harder. And yet—yet——"

"Yet?" the coach asked.

Danny shook his head. "I'd want to hit them with a bat if they didn't feel that way. Isn't there a chance—just a little chance, Craig—that you can get back in time for Monroe?"

There was a moment of silence. And then the boy awakened to the fact that the nine were not the only persons who felt the pang of coming separation.

"Danny," said the coach, "don't tempt me."

The captain tucked the books under one arm. At the door he turned back a moment.

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"If anything goes wrong, Craig, can't I write you a letter and ask for advice?"

"Marty Black will give you any advice you need, son."

"But if——"

"None of that, Danny. If I was here I'd let no other man put his fingers in my pie, and I know that Marty will feel the same way. You dig his record out of those books. You'll feel better when you find how good a player he was."

"But he isn't—" Danny began.

"None of that," said Craig. "Fair play, young man."

As the result of that talk Danny carried a new thought back to his room. So far he had been guided in all his talks with the nine by the ambition to make his nine a winner. Now he saw that he had to stand loyally by Marty Black not so much because he was captain of the nine, but through a clean spirit of fairness. He had to meet Marty half way, square and above board. His secret regrets that Craig was going would have to be killed.

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In his room he went through the records. Year by year he copied Marty Black's fielding and batting averages.

"He's a whale," Danny breathed when he saw the figures. "Why, he never hit less than .289, and look at his fielding."

Dutton came in just as the captain finished his labors. The catcher glanced at the records.

"Hello! What are you up to, Danny? Oh! Marty's records, eh?"

Dutton studied them. Danny pretended to search for a pencil.

"Well?" he asked suddenly.

"The pitchers weren't as good in his day as they are now," said Dutton. "Of course, Danny, I don't mean——"

"You mean that you're going to keep thinking about Craig," hot-headed Danny flared. "This man is coming here to help us win, and I think it's up to every one of us to stand by him."

Dutton turned away from the figures. "You needn't jump all over me. I'll stand by you——"

"I know you will," Danny broke in contritely.

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"I guess I'm getting grouchy, Dut. But why in thunder can't you fellows warm up to Marty?"

"You didn't warm to him at first," said the catcher. "Give us a chance. You know how we feel toward Craig."

"We must play fair with Marty Black," said Danny.

Later the captain went to the room of Keating, the editor of *The Greenie*, the school's weekly newspaper.

"Look here, Keat," he pleaded, "can't you give the nine a hand? If I don't get Marty in right with the fellows we're in for a bad season of baseball."

Keating wore round, black-rimmed eyeglasses. He took them off and tapped them against his chin. "What do you want, Danny?"

"I want these printed."

Keating surveyed the figures that told the story of Marty Black's record.

"I'll print them," he said solemnly, "in the next number. Will that be all right?"

"You bet it will," said Danny. "Make it

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strong, Keat. All about his experience, and how he's going to give us a team that will stop Monroe. You know how to do it, Keat."

"I surely do," the editor admitted.

Three days later, when *The Greenie* appeared, Danny admitted that Keating certainly did know how to do it. The story was two columns long, and Marty Black's record was set in black, heavy type. It was the sort of record to make boys enthuse. The dormitory building and the Yard began to chant the prowess of the new coach. The veterans of the nine began to feel the pull of sentiment. They became more hopeful and less inclined to mourn Craig.

And then Danny took up the cry of fair play to Marty Black. Within a week the veterans like Baggs and Cross and Talmage had come the way the captain wanted them to go. Back came much of the old confidence.

Danny felt a glow of joy. He had brought the boys around to feel that things were going to go right. That meant half the battle. And he knew, too, that Craig would be pleased.

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Now that so much had been settled, two big questions remained. When would Marty Black appear? When would indoor practice start? Danny was anxious to get his candidates to work as soon as possible, for he had a fifteen-game schedule ahead of him. He interviewed Pilgrim, a member of the athletic committee, but Pilgrim said he did not know. Next Danny dropped in on Craig.

"He's coming," said the man. "That's all I know."

"But," the captain argued, "suppose he doesn't show up until March first——"

Craig laughed. "He'll be here before February first," he said. "The first thing you know you'll be worrying about this nine of yours."

"I'm worrying now," said Danny ruefully. "If you hadn't been sick we'd be at indoor work before this."

However, the boy was wise enough to know that worry never yet helped anything. So as to give the baseball players something to look forward to, he announced that Marty Black would

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arrive before February first. Dutton looked at the calendar and said that February first fell on Friday and that everybody knew that Friday was a hard-luck day.

"All right," Danny cried hotly; "but to-day will be a hard-luck day for somebody if that kind of talk isn't stopped."

The catcher looked surprised. "Gosh, Danny! You talk as though you'd like to fight me."

"I'd fight Craig if he said discouraging things like that," Danny retorted, and Dutton, after a moment of silence, said soberly:

"I guess you're right. I'll cut that out."

The catcher meant what he said. But he had taken hold of the thought that Marty Black, ex-professional, would come to Manor Hall and look down upon them. Twice, in the next few days, he voiced pessimistic sentiments, and Danny had to struggle to hold his temper down. Then came word that Mr. and Mrs. Phipps were going south for a month or more and that Danny was wanted at home to see them off. So the captain

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journeyed back to Westbrook for a day, and was not at all sorry to go.

After his father and mother had departed, he had an hour to wait before his train started back for the school town. He wandered up Main Street to the store of the Westbrook Sporting Goods Company. There was a shiny black bat in the window that he had more than once admired. Now he stepped inside and asked to see it.

What a wonderful bat it was! Not too thick at the handle, not long enough to be clumsy, and not heavy enough to prevent him taking a free swing. He spanked at the air and thought joyously that this particular bat was just made for him.

"A very fine piece of wood," said the salesman.

Danny didn't know whether the wood was fine or not. Nevertheless he ran his fingers down the grain, and squinted wisely, and said yes, it was very fine indeed.

"Only one dollar and a quarter," said the salesman.

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Danny sighed. He would have to live pretty quietly, because there wouldn't be much left of his spending money, but——

"I'll take it," he announced.

"Of course you'll want a bat bag," said the salesman.

"Oh, of course," said Danny recklessly.

Five minutes later he was out with his bat and bag. He had twenty cents in his pocket, and that twenty cents would have to last him three weeks. But then, again, he had a wonderful bat, and he'd like to see the pitcher who would send him back to the bench on strikes. He certainly would like to see that pitcher.

When his train arrived at the Westbrook station, he climbed into the nearest car. He dropped into a seat alongside a man who had been staring out of the car window. He had the bat bag between his legs. After a while he became conscious that the man had turned in the seat and was looking at him and smiling. Danny smiled, too.

"I see you've got a stick there," said the man.

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"It's a good one," said the boy. "A very fine piece of wood." He spoke with an air of superiority.

"Regular home run bat, eh?" the man asked.

"Well," Danny confessed, "I haven't hit any home runs with it yet."

"No? How's that?"

"Haven't had it in any games yet."

"Oh! So that's the only reason you haven't hit home runs, what?"

"Well," said Danny with enthusiasm, "I guess I could hit a couple if I had a chance."

The man grunted. "I guess you're the best player on your team, aren't you?"

"The fellows elected me captain."

"Captain, eh? What are you, a pitcher?"

"No; I play second base."

"Second base! Huh! That's a mighty important position. I guess they don't get many of them past you."

"Not many," said Danny.

He did not see the amused light in the man's eyes. He was being coated with sticky flattery,

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and he was losing his head and boasting in a way that was altogether foreign to his nature. More than once Craig had called him a manly little chap, but he wasn't at all manly now.

Recklessly he talked of himself, of his team, of what he would do and of what his team would do. Craftily the stranger led him on.

"I suppose that nine of yours will clean up this season?" the man asked.

"Pretty nearly," Danny answered stoutly.

"I suppose they'd lose about every game without you, what?"

There was something about the question that made the boy's eyes jump to the man's face. Slowly Danny awakened to the fact that this stranger had been poking fun at him. He became aware, too, of how foolish his talk must have sounded. A hot flush crept into his cheeks.

"Maybe," he said stiffly.

It would have been just as well had he not answered so primly. But he was angry at the man for having led him on, and angry at himself for having played the fool. Anyway, what



“ ‘ Marty Black is here,’ said Craig ”

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right had a man to make sport of a boy in that fashion?

"You ought to be in the big leagues in three or four years," said the stranger.

Danny, fighting for self-control, pulled the bat bag from between his legs, stood up and stepped out into the aisle of the car. He would retreat, but he would try to do so without showing how hard he was hit.

"Three or four years," he said scornfully. "Huh! I have a contract in my pocket now."

He turned away. He heard the man say, "You came back with a hot one that time, youngster," but he did not look back. He found a seat in a car up ahead.

His anger by this time had given place to shame. Suppose Craig had heard him? Hadn't he been the chump?

He had a feeling that he had been guilty of some kind of wrong. This feeling was still with him when he left the train at Manor Hall. He walked slowly to the school grounds, crossed the Yard and tramped up to his room in the dormi-

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tory building. There he found Dutton washing for supper.

"Hello!" cried the catcher. "You look sick. Anything wrong?"

"Nothing," said Danny.

"Well, you look as though something hit you. What's that, a bat? Let's see it."

The stick was taken from its covering. Dutton felt it, and swung it, and finally put it back in its case.

"I bet you feel as though you could knock a home run with that every time," he said to Danny.

The captain flushed painfully. "I don't feel anything of the kind, Dut."

At supper the catcher told several of the fellows that Danny had a "cuckoo of a bat." Later, Cross, Talmage and Jerome came up to inspect the weapon. While they were there word was brought to Danny that Craig wanted to see him.

He went across the Yard wondering what the coach could want. The street door of the house was open, so he did not bother to ring the bell. He ran lightly up the stairs. Craig must have

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been watching for him, for Craig's voice cried:

"Come right in, Danny. Don't knock."

The boy entered the coach's rooms. He saw a wide grin on the man's face, as though there was good news.

"Marty Black is here," said Craig.

Danny's eyes jumped to the other end of the room. There, sitting at Craig's desk, was the man who had made game of him on the train.

CHAPTER III

THE BASEBALL MEETING

IT took wise old Craig but a moment to see that something was amiss. Danny looked hot and uncomfortable, and the coach knew by the signs that something had gone wrong. Marty Black grinned with vast amusement. And into Craig's mind came Danny's question, "Does he know boys?"

"So this is Danny Phipps, eh?" asked Marty. He held out his hand. "Cap, I'm pleased to meet you again."

Danny took the hand. Craig shot the boy a glance of concern.

"Did you and Marty meet on the train?" the old coach demanded.

Danny colored. "We did," he said shortly.

THE BASEBALL MEETING

Marty laughed. "We had a talk," he said. "Danny told me just what sort of player he was, didn't you, Cap? If he plays that way while I'm here I'll be satisfied."

This time Craig gave Danny a long look, and the boy's cheeks grew scarlet.

"I boasted, Craig," he said in a low, ashamed voice. "I said I was a bangup second-baseman and that I'd be hitting out home runs with my new bat. I talked like a big kid——"

"Bosh!" laughed Marty Black. "I led you on, Cap. I like to see a kid who thinks well of himself."

"We don't like boasters at Manor Hall," said Danny. "If any of the fellows had heard me——"

"But they didn't," said Marty Black, "so what's the difference? We're going to get on well together, Cap. I like your style. Craig says you can play ball, so I guess you weren't boasting much at that."

Danny didn't argue. Besides, he had a feeling that Marty Black wouldn't understand if he

did attempt to explain. Deep in the back of his head was the thought that a man who would have a fellow talk big just for amusement was going to find it hard to take the place of Craig. He looked at the old coach, and Craig sent him a smile that somewhat comforted him.

"Danny's head is pretty level," Craig told Marty. "He doesn't often forget himself."

"Bosh!" said the new coach. "Every kid must have a foolish fling now and then. We understand each other, don't we, Cap?"

Danny tried to say "Yes" with a show of enthusiasm, but his voice sounded flat. He wished that Marty Black would not say "kids" so often.

Craig saw that here was an interview charged with dynamite. It was best to be rid of Danny before the boy showed plainly that he had been hard hit.

"All right, son," he said. "I brought you over so you could say 'Hello.' Run along now. I want to get Marty posted. Bring the fellows to the gym to-morrow at three-thirty, and we'll introduce them."

THE BASEBALL MEETING

Danny nodded. "I'll bring them. When—when will we start indoor practice, Marty?"

The new coach waved a heavy hand with a show of friendliness. "I'll leave that to you, Cap. Any time you say."

Well, that was better, anyway. Danny left feeling that things would have been fine indeed only for that unfortunate meeting on the train. He was glad now that he had told none of the boys of the happening, and he was quite sure that Craig would warn Marty Black to keep the news of their train meeting a secret.

Dutton was studying when the captain entered their room. The catcher pushed away his book.

"What did Craig want, Danny?"

"He wanted to introduce me to Marty Black."

Dutton jumped from the chair. "Is he here? What does he look like?"

Danny's description was vague and listless, so colorless in fact that Dutton said suspiciously:

"You don't seem to be very enthusiastic, Danny."

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The captain pulled himself together. "I was thinking of some things Marty told me," he explained.

Dutton came closer. "How is he? Is he—is he— You know what I mean, Danny? Is he the kind we can work in with in the old way, or will he want to boss the works?"

"Boss!" Danny demanded. "Wake up! He's left it to me when we shall start indoor practice. That doesn't look like bossing, does it?"

Of course it didn't. Dutton gave a sigh of relief. He told Danny that all along he had been afraid of Marty.

"When Craig's there," he explained, "I just catch and sort of forget myself. But if this Marty Black was going to be pecking at us because we didn't do this or that right— That would get on my nerves, Danny. I'd be saying to myself, 'Here's a big leaguer and he thinks I'm a busher, and maybe he's laughing at me up his sleeve——' "

"Laughing?" Danny broke in indignantly. "Marty Black laughing? He's not that kind."

THE BASEBALL MEETING

"Whew!" the catcher breathed. He looked at the captain and smiled. "I feel better now."

Danny didn't. Suppose Marty did have a habit of leading every fellow he met to boast about himself?

"When will we meet him?" Dutton asked eagerly.

"To-morrow afternoon at the gym," Danny answered; and at once Dutton sped from the room to spread the news.

The baseball men soon thronged to the captain's quarters. Cross slapped Danny on the shoulders and grinned happily.

"How about it, Danny?" he asked. "Is that story Dutton tells true?"

"What story?"

"About Marty Black leaving it to you when we should start indoor practice?"

"Oh, that's true," Danny answered stoutly.

Cross grinned again. "Say, I'm glad way down in my shoes. I didn't say anything to you, but Jerome was scared. Jerry's a peculiar chap. He

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went around thinking Marty would fire him from the squad if his control wasn't just right."

"Huh!" said Danny. "Marty's here to give every fellow a chance. How does Jerome feel now?"

"Look at him," said Cross.

Danny stared across the room. Jerome was skylarking merrily. From then until the ten o'clock bell rang the captain carried a kernel of worry in his mind. Just how many of his boys were secretly afraid of their new coach?

That thought kept him tossing on his pillow when he went to bed. However, once he fell asleep, his restlessness passed. He awoke in the morning refreshed. After breakfast he had half an hour before classes. He came out to the Yard and found Craig loitering near the dormitory building. The man motioned to him. They walked off toward the athletic grounds.

"I'm going away to-morrow," Craig said. "I want to talk to you before I go. Your big problem will be your pitchers. I have told Marty Black what he might expect, and now

THE BASEBALL MEETING

I want to post you. What do you think of Steele?"

"He—he hasn't much," Danny confessed, "and yet somehow he seems to win his share of the games."

"Confidence," said Craig. "That's his strength, Danny. Any time you can make him believe that the nine cannot be beaten he'll most likely go in and win for you. Don't forget that. Any time he gets the idea that a game can't be lost, send him to the mound."

Danny nodded. "I'll remember that."

"Now as for King. He's big, Danny, and he's powerful, but don't make the mistake of rating him too high. He lacks head. You must use your brains as to when to pitch King. Strength and speed are not enough against a fast, hard-playing nine. And now as for Jerome——"

Danny looked up quickly. "Yes, sir."

"He's a hard case," Craig said slowly. "If he doesn't get control, son, he's hopeless. But I want you to remember this: never lose patience with him. He's the hardest pitcher of the lot

CAPTAIN DANNY

to hit. If he ever begins to put that ball over he'll be the best you have."

"I've always thought that," said Danny. "But he doesn't seem to have any faith in himself, and he's been afraid a professional coach would see his wildness and jump on his neck and—" The boy stopped.

"And what?" asked Craig.

"Nothing," Danny answered. "I shouldn't have told you that. It slipped out. I don't want you to go away thinking all's not well, because you'll worry. Jerome is over that feeling, anyway."

"How did he get over it?" the man asked suspiciously.

"I told how Marty Black left it to me to start the indoor practice."

Craig whistled softly. So that was how the boy was playing his cards. Clever, quite clever.

"Danny," he said abruptly, "let's get down to the real thing. You and Marty must pull together."

"We're going to," said the boy.

THE BASEBALL MEETING

"I don't mean just pull together on the surface. I mean the big pull, son—so that you'll go to him with all your worries and troubles and feel that he'll try to pull you out. I know he rubbed you a bit the wrong way on the train, but that must be forgotten. He was only kidding; and see what he said about liking a chap who thinks well of himself? That's his league training, Danny. Up in the leagues the fellow who doesn't bubble with confidence doesn't last. Marty knows the game. That's the big test. He knows the game. He'll give you a corking good nine if you pull with him."

"I'll pull," Danny said huskily.

The old coach smiled. "That's the talk. Remember your football experiences? You got your temper under control on the football field. Keep it there. If it gets the better of you, you are gone. I don't mean you must knuckle under to anybody; but you must keep that temper so you know just what you are doing and saying, and just where you are going and how far. It isn't possible that you and Marty will think alike on

CAPTAIN DANNY

every question. But keep your temper. And remember one thing—Marty Black was playing baseball for a living when you were in a baby carriage.”

They were over near the gym now. They swung around and started back toward the Yard. Suddenly the class bell rang. Danny stopped short.

“I—I’m glad I had this talk with you,” he said. He reached out and gripped Craig’s hand, and then turned and raced away. And Craig stood there and stared after him wistfully.

“Danny, Danny!” he murmured affectionately. “I know you’ll play fair all the way, but I’m afraid there’s going to be trouble.”

That afternoon Danny brought the players to the gym and introduced them to Marty Black. He wondered what the outcome would be, and his heart was in his throat as he entered the building. Would Marty start more of his kidding? But Craig was there, and Craig kept the fellows merry with his quips and jests. When they came back

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to the Yard they forgot that Marty had had little to say. They voted him a good fellow, and Danny raced up to his room and jigged with joy. Later Dutton came in.

"Well," Danny demanded, "what do you think of him now?"

"He looks like a ball player," said the catcher. Later it came to Danny that Dutton could have made a better speech had he said that Marty looked like a coach.

Next day Craig left Manor Hall. Danny would have felt better for another talk with the old master, but no opportunity for such a talk came. He went down to the station with the other students and cheered uproariously as the train pulled out. After that he walked back to the Yard with the old feeling of helplessness stealing over him. Dutton wanted to sit up and talk about Craig, but Danny said he was tired and went to bed.

For three days Marty Black lounged about the Yard and made efforts to get acquainted with the boys. He made friends fast enough, for he wore

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the halo of a baseball hero and every Manor Hall fellow had clipped Marty's record from *The Greenie*. Besides he told the boys that he had never had anything to do with a loser. Danny wished he hadn't said that. It might lead the school to expect too much.

Marty had taken Craig's old rooms. The following Monday afternoon he sent for Danny, and at once the school declared that this meant the start of indoor practice.

Marty, however, had not been thinking about indoor practice when he sent for the captain. When Danny came in the man had several sheets of paper before him. They were scribbled with names and figures.

"We've got to get a line on the team, Cap," said Marty. "Sit down here and talk things over."

Danny sat down. It seemed strange to come into these familiar rooms and not see Craig.

"Now, Craig tells me we can expect nothing from the recruits—I mean the freshman class. How's that? Right?"

THE BASEBALL MEETING

"Right," said Danny. "They're pretty young, and none of them have played much ball."

"All right. Here's this chap Cross. How's he for first base?"

"Best in the school," said Danny.

"All right. Then we'll put him down for first. This is all dope, you know. This doesn't mean that anybody is sure of his place."

"I know," said Danny.

"Second base. That's you, Cap. I guess there won't be any trouble there. And Talmage is on third. How about him? Makes a lot of errors, doesn't he?"

"He tries for everything," Danny answered.

"Trying to show off and cover the whole field," grunted Marty. "We'll knock that out of him."

"He doesn't," Danny defended. "He isn't the show off kind. But he tries——"

"All right," Marty interrupted. "Put him down."

Danny wrote Talmage's name. How, he wondered, could Marty say Tal was a grandstand

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player without ever having seen him in action?

"Now for short. How about this kid Lee? The dope books here don't show him up as much of a hitter, and he's no stone wall as a fielder. How about him?"

"He's good," said Danny quickly. "Of course, he doesn't field as well as he might, and his batting average isn't good. But he's a terror when he gets on the bases. He got on less than any fellow last year, and yet scored more runs. We didn't meet a catcher who could stop him stealing."

"Must have been pretty rotten catchers," said Marty.

Danny bit his lips. How did Marty know whether the other catchers had been good or bad, he asked himself. And why could not Marty give Lee credit for what had been done? Why throw cold water?

"Now for the outfield," said the man. "Chapman in left. Got a good record, hasn't he? And Baggs in center. Cap, there's a bird who can hit. He does his hitting in the pinches, too. I'm sweet on that kid already. How about right field?"

THE BASEBALL MEETING

Danny shook his head. "The fellow who played right field last year has graduated."

"We'll find somebody," said Marty. "Maybe we'll let Talmage go out there and cover a lot of ground."

Danny said nothing to that. He felt, somehow, as though this wasn't a Manor Hall coach and as though this wasn't Manor Hall at all.

"Let's take a squint at the catchers. Here's two of them—Dutton and Orth. Dutton's the big noise and Orth trails along and warms up the pitchers. Right?"

"No. Orth has caught quite a few games."

"Big games?"

"Well, no—not the big games. Dutton catches them."

"He's your bunkie, isn't he?" Marty asked. Then, as Danny gave him a puzzled glance: "Your roommate."

Slowly the captain's face colored. "We room together," he said. "I wasn't captain last year, but Dutton was the first-string catcher."

"No offense, Cap," Marty hastened to say.

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"I just wanted to ask. Kids will have their favorites, and I thought perhaps maybe this Dutton might horn in for a little the best of it."

"We don't play favorites at Manor Hall," said Danny slowly. "Craig should have told you that."

"Oh, Craig told me," Marty grinned, "but my motto is to find out for myself. Well, Cap, here's the pitchers."

For a moment Danny did not care a rap about the pitchers. He felt that he wanted to get out of here and get away. Then he remembered Craig's warning that he and the coach must pull together. He tried to force an interest he did not for the moment feel.

"We'll have a pretty good staff, won't we, Marty?"

"Oh, I'll make pitchers out of them," said Marty. "This chap Steele seems to have some good games in his bag, but this kid King is my bacon. He has beef and strength. He ought to be able to steam them in some."

"He has speed," Danny agreed; "but I don't think he has much head and——"

THE BASEBALL MEETING

"Now, now," Marty cautioned tolerantly. "I'll tend to the headwork, Cap."

"But Craig says——"

"I'm coaching this team," snapped Marty.

It was the first time the man had shown his teeth. Suddenly Danny remembered Craig's refusal to answer letters because it might interfere with Marty's control.

"Of course you're the coach," Danny hastened to say. "I thought maybe you'd like to know what Craig thought, that's all."

Marty grinned. "All right. So long as we understand each other there's no harm done. Craig didn't ask my opinion when he bossed the gang."

"Of course not," said the captain.

Marty folded his papers and put them away. "I guess that's all, Cap. It wouldn't do any harm if we had another pitcher."

"We have," Danny cried. "There's Jerome——"

"Jerome! Cap, that bird's hopeless."

"How do you know?"

CAPTAIN DANNY

"Haven't I seen his record? Seven and eight passed to first base to the game. We can't use a shooter with control like that."

"But you haven't seen him work this year and——"

"I've seen his record," Marty said soothingly. "I know these wild birds, Cap. I've seen hundreds of them. They haven't got control, and you couldn't buy it and give it to them."

"But he ought to have a chance to show——"

"He's shown it here," said Marty, tapping the old score books.

Danny bit his lips. Craig would never have prejudged a player. And as for knowing how a man would shape up——

"Look here, Marty," he argued. "This record stuff doesn't always go. Take Marquard, for instance. If McGraw had released him after his first year or so, what chance would he have had to make that record of nineteen straight?"

Marty waved a silencing hand. "Cap," he advised good-naturedly, "don't get arguing big league ball. You'll get out over your head."

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There was a what's-the-use-of-arguing-with-a-boy air about the man. This time Danny bit his lips, but it did no good. His answer came right from the shoulder.

"Jerome gets a chance," he said, "to show what he has. No Manor Hall fellow was ever turned down without a hearing."

"All right," said Marty tolerantly, "if you want to waste time, go ahead."

Danny now forced a smile. Craig had said pull together and he would pull. He brought up the question of indoor practice. Marty showed little interest, and when the boy suggested that they start the following Monday the man agreed.

"How about the meeting?" Danny asked. "Will next Wednesday night do?"

"What meeting?"

"The meeting of the baseball candidates," Danny answered. "You see, we'll announce the start of practice for next Monday, and we'll call a meeting for Wednesday night."

"What's done at the meeting?"

CAPTAIN DANNY

"Oh, speeches and all that. Sort of starts things off with enthusiasm."

Marty flashed a smile of amusement. "Let me get this straight, Cap. You mean you have a meeting and get everybody excited and cheering?"

"That's what I mean."

Marty's amusement increased. "Is that how you play baseball here? Speeches and cheering! That's a hot one, isn't it? I've played baseball a long time, but I never heard of starting the season with a mass meeting. Guess I'll tip off Connie Mack and Clark Griffith. Who makes the speeches, Cap?"

"I make one," said Danny.

"Do you? Well, well. Anybody else make a speech?"

"The coach does," said Danny.

Marty Black sat up straight. "I make a speech! Is this on the level, Cap? What in Sam Hill do I make a speech about?"

Danny explained patiently that the meeting was to get things started properly, to awaken enthusiasm, to get the captain and the coach in closer

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touch with the players. Marty, after a while, seemed to comprehend.

"All right," he said. "I'll be there with some guff." The amused smile came back to his face. "Wonder what the old-timers would say if they saw Marty Black starting the season with a speech?"

Danny departed with a feeling that things weren't going right. He spread the word that indoor practice would start on the following Monday, and that there would be a meeting of the baseball candidates at the trophy room of the gym on Wednesday night. Dutton grinned and said that that certainly suited him. Cross, the first-baseman, drew Danny aside.

"That was your first conference with him, wasn't it?" Cross asked.

Danny nodded.

"How was he?"

"Fine!" said Danny. "This nine ought to run like a clock. Watch us after we get started."

"Did he say anything about Jerome? I'm a little worried about Jerry. I room with him and

CAPTAIN DANNY

I know him better than any of you. He wants to be a real pitcher, Danny. How will Marty treat him? Will his record last year——”

“Forget it,” said Danny decisively. “If Jerome starts to fret, you tell him that it’s up to him what happens this year. If Jerry can pitch he can have his regular turn.”

Baseball fever raged at Manor Hall for the next three days. Marty Black didn’t lounge about the Yard quite as much, for the weather had turned raw and cold. Wednesday afternoon there was a great bustle and preparation, and Wednesday night the fellows who had decided to try for the nine began to move toward the gym soon after supper.

Danny went off with the early starters. He found Marty Black already in the trophy room examining the baseballs and the footballs that had been won on many a hard-fought field. There were boating flags, too, but only a few of these, for Manor Hall had long ago given up this sport.

Marty looked curiously at the fellows as they thronged in. The size of the gathering pleased

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him, and he was just the least bit impressed by the seriousness of the boys. When Danny introduced him he stood up somewhat awkwardly. The crowd started a cheer that rang sincere and true. The cheering must have seemed funny to Marty, for the amused look returned to his face and he winked across at Danny.

"This meeting business is new stuff to me," he began. "Where I came from we play ball and talk about it afterwards."

Danny caught his breath. Three or four of the boys glanced inquiringly at one another.

"Of course," Marty went on, "just because these meetings are new to me doesn't say that they're not all right. I'm not one for stopping things. Cap here said he wanted a meeting. So I told him to go ahead, and here we are.

"You youngsters may think you know a lot about this game, but we'll get along better if you forget it. You've been licked up here and you're just floundering around. I want you fellows to get out the material. I'll do the rest. Inside ball is what you want. The old-fashioned game

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has gone out of style. You want up-to-date baseball with no whiskers on it. That's what I'm going to give you this year. What you had last year or what you'll get next year isn't part of the plan. What you'll get this year is what cleans up the bases. So I say if you think you know baseball, forget it."

By this time there was suppressed consternation among the candidates. This was different from what Craig used to say to them at the baseball meetings. They looked at Danny. But Danny had managed to achieve a calm, unruffled front. He wasn't going to advertise that this talk was scaring him down to his toenails.

"I can't be fooled," Marty Black went on, "and there's no use trying to slip anything over on me. Craig gave me the dope books, and I know every fellow's record. I understand that you lost your big games last year because your pitchers couldn't get the ball over the plate. This pitching stuff is just as easy as anything else if you know how. I'll show you how. And I'll show you how to bat so you'll have all the kid

THE BASEBALL MEETING

pitchers buffaloed. We're going to have a big year. That's what I've told Cap here, and that's what I tell you."

Marty sat down. Danny saw at once that the boys, and particularly Jerome, were all at sea, and that something had to be done at once to save a bad situation. He stepped forward.

"We welcome Marty here," he said, "and we'll work hard for him. What he said about records is true. He knows what every fellow has done."

Jerome seemed to wilt in his seat.

"But we have agreed to let bygones be bygones," Danny went on. "We start next Monday with a clean slate. No fellow will be judged on what he did last season. It's this season that counts."

Jerome straightened in his chair.

"What he says about pitching is true. It's easy to learn if you have somebody to teach you who knows how. Marty knows how. He's had a lifetime of experience, and you all saw his record in *The Greenie*. It's up to us to learn what he wants us to learn. If we do that we're going to

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put enough tears on the Monroe campus to start new grass growing."

Some of the fellows laughed. "That's the boy, Danny."

"There's another thing, fellows," the captain went on. "No knocking in the squad. We must all stand together, and play together, and go together through good days and bad. We have a fifteen-games schedule. It's almost impossible to win every game. When we do drop one—if we do—don't start to say that this pitcher or that pitcher should have been used, or that this or that was wrong. Stand together. And keep up in your studies. We can't afford to bother with a fellow who is behind. That's all unless Marty wants to say something else."

But Marty, to Danny's relief, shook his head.

The atmosphere of the trophy room had brightened, but still there was a lack of warmth. The boys began to drift down the stairway and out into the cold, blustery night. Danny and Marty were left alone.

"What do you think of it?" Danny asked.

THE BASEBALL MEETING

"Have as many as you like, Cap," Marty laughed. "I guess they won't do any harm."

Danny walked back to the dormitory building keenly disappointed, but resolved that nothing should happen to prevent coach and captain from pulling together this year at Manor Hall. The meeting could have gone better, and perhaps he had made a mistake in saying the things he had said. Perhaps the fellows would see that he had really been answering Marty. He hoped not.

He entered his room, and at once Dutton jumped to his feet.

"What was he growling at us for?" the catcher demanded indignantly.

"He wasn't growling," Danny answered. "He's all right, Dut."

"He was growling," Dutton insisted. "He must not think that just because he had a couple of fingers banged up in the days when Delehanty and Silent Mike Tiernan and Van Haltren were hammering them out that he can tell us we're sap-heads and must forget all we know."

CAPTAIN DANNY

"He wasn't telling you that," Danny insisted desperately. "It's just his way."

"His way?" Dutton demanded incredulously. "Then you take this from me, Danny, he has a mighty poor way."

CHAPTER IV

JEROME GOES WILD

DURING the four days before the start of the indoor practice Danny made a heroic fight against a heartsick discouragement. He combated a restless feeling that showed itself among his veterans, and he kept telling Dutton how smoothly things would run once the actual work started. Several times, too, he made it a point to see that his path crossed that of Jerome. He told the pitcher breezily that great things were expected of him.

"You know, Jerry," he grinned, "you were always the hardest to hit."

"But I could never get them over the plate," Jerome complained, and looked at the captain as though Danny might tell him some

CAPTAIN DANNY

wonderful secret that would bring about control.

"Huh!" said Danny airily. "Don't let that worry you, Jerry. Marty Black will show you how to put that ball just where you want it to go."

"Will he?" Jerome asked eagerly.

"He certainly will. You just make up your mind that you're going to be some pitcher this year."

Each of these four afternoons the captain spent an hour or more with Marty Black. The man was now in a genial mood, and things began to run better. He told Danny many stories of the diamond in the big leagues, and after a time the boy felt himself warming to the new coach. He had learned that Marty's days of schooling had been few.

"I suppose that a baseball meeting does seem foolish to a chap who knows nothing about school spirit," Danny reflected. "Oh, well, everything will be all right once we start to throw the ball around."

But in this thought Danny was wrong. For,

JEROME GOES WILD

no sooner had indoor practice started on Monday, than the captain discovered that the coach had little sympathy with the cage.

As a matter of fact, the cage was a poor apology for what a modern college squad now enjoys. For a preparatory school, however, it was fair. It was long and narrow, so that balls had to be batted straight down if they were to be batted at all. Pitching and catching were confined to one pair at a time. But at any rate this cage had served for several years. Despite its faults it was a good place for boys to work in their arms and get used to picking up the ball, for the dirt surface was always well groomed.

The first day in the cage Marty strolled off to a corner and gloomily watched those boys who worked in the cage's narrow space. He did not, as was Craig's habit, walk about with a word of encouragement to this player or to that. In fact, he said absolutely nothing. Danny saw that his attitude made the candidates nervous. Even the veterans fell under the spell. The result was that the afternoon's work accomplished nothing.

CAPTAIN DANNY

After the last man had taken his turn at the showers and had gone, the captain approached the coach.

"What do you think of them?" he asked.

"Can't tell, Cap," said Marty. "Is this the only indoor place you've got?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's pretty poor. Do you want to start any batting practice in here?"

"Well," Danny said, "the light isn't all that it should be——"

"Right!" said Marty. "This light would knock the batting eye out of Ty Cobb. You can't have any batting here. Then what good is this cage? You can't win ball games if your team doesn't hit."

"But the fellows can work out their arms and get used to the feel of the ball, Marty."

"Not here," said Marty. "This cage is my idea of no place to play ball."

"But it gives us a chance to size up the players," Danny argued desperately.

"You can't tell anything about them until they

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go outdoors," the coach said blandly. "There's no argument about that, Cap. I think I know a ball player when I see one, but even I couldn't pick them from seeing them here."

Danny felt that it was going to be hard work with a coach who said so many discouraging things. He knew that Craig had always made it a point to know quite a bit about the fellows before they got to the field, and he wondered why Marty could not do likewise.

"The school has always been used to the cage," he said slowly. "If we stopped——"

"Go to it," said Marty with a wave of his hands. "I'm not trying to change custom. If the school wants the cage, go right ahead. You asked me what I thought and I told you. That's all."

"If you'd say a word or two to the fel——"

"I'll talk to them, Cap," was the answer.

Danny walked back to the dormitory building feeling blue and despondent. He knew that much of what Marty said was true, but that fact did not mend matters. Even if the cage were poor,

even if the light were such that a change to outdoors would be complete, couldn't Marty assume a spirit of hopefulness? It was the coach's complete lack of sympathy that made the captain feel that he was standing alone.

Danny nursed one big fear. Suppose the candidates awoke to the fact that Marty scorned the cage? The boy was sure that most of the fellows would instantly drop work.

But to the captain's joy, Marty next day made it a point to roam around a bit and say a few cheery words to the candidates. In the main he cautioned them to take things easily.

"Just lob that ball," he ordered. "No speed. Lots of time for fast work when we hit the sunshine. No speed."

Toward the end of the afternoon the pitchers took turns throwing to Dutton. Jerome cast an apprehensive glance at Marty Black when his turn came, but Marty paid no attention to him. So the boy went to work and soon forgot the coach. Dutton very wisely neglected to hold his glove as a target, with the result that the pitcher

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had no reason, when his turn ended, to worry about control.

But if Jerome was happy to escape without notice, Danny was not happy to have it so. He had seen that Marty had eagerly watched Steele and King. Why, then, had Marty taken scant interest in the third member of the pitching staff?

Danny's temper flared. But in a moment he had himself under control. There was no proof that Marty intended to slight Jerome. Perhaps his interest had been attracted to some other point in the cage.

"But Jerry's going to get his chance," Danny muttered, "if—if I have to get out and coach him myself."

A week passed in the cage. During that time Marty came daily to the practice and moved about among the fellows. But, despite the fact that he praised and joked, Danny slowly became aware that the practice was dead. Occasionally some boy like Cross or Talmage would start things buzzing for a few moments, but always there came the reaction. Oh, for one of the old afternoons

with Craig on the firing line and every fellow jumping alive!

The captain did not blame Marty for the condition. He blamed himself. He thought that in some way he was failing to fill his squad with the fighting spirit. So he took to driving the boys. They were hardened now, and muscles had lost their stiffness. He started to force the play to the utmost limits that the cage permitted.

"What's the idea, Cap?" Marty asked that afternoon after the last candidate had departed.

"What idea?" Danny asked.

"All this fire and fury this afternoon. What's the idea?"

"Don't you see how lifeless the fellows are?" the captain cried. "I'm trying to ginger them."

"No use," said Marty with a note of finality in his voice. "This cage would take the go out of a——"

"Can't you give me a little encouragement now and then?" Danny blurted.

Marty's eyes opened with surprise. "What's wrong?" he demanded. "Do you want me to

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say this cage is fine for practice? That's not my style. I say what I think. Why, you haven't enough baths, for one thing."

"But we've gone along all these years this way," Danny retorted, "and things haven't been so dead before."

"Maybe the fellows are waking up to what a false alarm this cage is," Marty suggested. "The trouble, Cap, is this: You boys want to play ball before April. You can't get into condition here. Why don't you go and see the chief—Dr. Wilmer, I mean—and ask for a three weeks' trip for the nine? You could arrange games——"

Danny groaned and shook his head. "Impossible, Marty. This isn't a big league team. This is a prep school." At any other time the boy would have laughed at so absurd a suggestion, but now he wasn't in the mood for laughter.

"March games are March games," said Marty, "no matter what kind of team you have. You can't get away from the weather. And as for encouraging you——" He looked at Danny a moment. "What do you want me to do?"

"Get into the game," said Danny swiftly. "Oh, I'm not finding fault, Marty. I don't mean it that way. But I'm trying to stir things up, and you're just telling me I can't instead of jumping in and giving me a hand."

"So that's it, eh? Well, I'll jump in. Anything else, Cap?"

"No," said Danny weakly. He was sorry now that he had spoken and he wondered if Marty would take offense. But Marty whistled cheerily as he adjusted his cravat in front of a cracked mirror. Then he waited until Danny was dressed, and together they walked toward the Yard, with the coach chatting as though nothing had happened. As they parted he said:

"Speed it is to-morrow, Cap. There isn't anything else now, is there?"

"Nothing," said Danny. As he went toward the dormitory building he suddenly realized the cause of Marty Black's unconcern. Marty Black looked upon him as a whimpering boy and at his request as a whim that it would do no harm to humor.

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Danny went up the dormitory outdoor steps feeling that he would like to kick his toes savagely against the stone. He and the coach were making no progress toward a sympathetic understanding of the school's needs.

Next afternoon Danny hurried to the cage immediately after classes. He found Marty there, and Marty wore his big league uniform. The captain stopped short with a gasp. Marty laughed good-naturedly.

"Think this will wake them up, Cap?"

"Oh!" cried Danny. "Why didn't we think of wearing that before?"

It was the first time that Marty had given a hint that perhaps he might know boys. Danny felt as though a load was lifted from his mind. To-day's practice would surely go with a bang.

"Stand where they can see you when they come in," he pleaded.

Marty grinned. "Right here," he said.

That uniform, suggestive as it was of glorious days on a big league diamond, acted on the squad as a tonic. In the dressing-room the fellows

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cheered and sang and performed feats of horse-play. It was the first time they had romped in so carefree a manner since they had come to the cage.

Finally the fellows came out to the practice. At once the good humor left Marty Black's face. Danny called off the boys who were to handle the ball.

"Speed there," Marty cried sharply. "No more girly-girly baseball. Get some action. Come on there, Talmage, what are you dreaming about? Throw the ball."

Talmage, who had been staring at the coach as though he had not heard, threw to Dutton. Dutton dropped the ball.

"Pick it up," Marty yelled. "Don't stand there looking at it. Pick it up. Now what are you going to do with it?"

Dutton threw it to Cross. Cross, who seemed to have held his head, tossed to Talmage, and Talmage allowed the leather to go through his hands.

"Oh!" Marty wailed. "Somebody get a police-

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man. You're starting in early with your errors, Talmage. See if you can line it into Dutton's glove. Line it now."

Talmage lined it with a viciousness that sent it into the catcher's big mitt with a loud, spanking noise. "How's that?" he cried angrily.

"Better," shouted Marty. "Everybody work. Lively now."

Talmage's retort had been rank insubordination. But in the big league circles in which Marty Black had played, the man who could not talk back was thought to be minus in spunk. Marty did not see the disloyalty. To his mind the retort showed that Talmage was there with the "pep."

Quick-witted Danny guessed as much. But he knew that tilts such as these were bad for the squad, whether Marty understood so or not. And he felt, with a sinking of the heart, that big league sarcasm was not the proper dose to deal out to schoolboys. Craig's tongue could lash on occasion, but not this way. Oh, why would not Marty, who understood so much about baseball, try to understand something about boys?

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Along the cage wall, where the other candidates were lined, there was much whispering. Danny paid no attention to this. He had his eyes on the play as the ball sped back and forth. He wanted no more fireworks, for the sparks might start a blaze in the squad that would do damage before it was put out.

Talmage missed another catch. Marty's voice cracked out a flow of sarcasm.

"Steady, Tal," Danny called. "Steady! Get in the game, fellows. Make it travel. That's the ticket. Now, Dut! Jump! Good catch."

"Rotten throw," barked Marty.

Ten minutes later Marty yelled for a new squad, and announced that they couldn't be any worse than the boys who had just been playing. Cross, Talmage, Dutton and two other candidates walked off toward the dressing-rooms. The new squad took the center of the cage and fumbled outrageously. Marty announced that a team of milkmaids could do better. And so the practice ran along for the afternoon.

At the finish Danny felt as though he never

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again wanted to hear anybody say "Speed." The squad was demoralized. In the dressing-room he tried in a stumbling sort of way to tell Marty that he had been too severe.

"You wanted pepper, didn't you?" the coach demanded. "Must I say 'Please' whenever I coach. I don't get you, Cap."

No, and the trouble was that Marty would probably not understand if the captain had explained for a week. The coach had grown up in a baseball school where men gave hard knocks and took them.

"We'll let up on the ginger for a while," Danny said weakly.

"Now you're talking," Marty cried in good humor. "You're coming around. Didn't I tell you the cage was no place for anything?"

Danny nodded. Later, when he got to his room, Dutton looked at him with an air that said what-do-you-think-of-things-now? But Danny had no comments to make. He wanted time to think out this latest twist.

Next day, and the next, and the next, the squad

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found the cage practice back along its old lines. But the damage had been done. There was a feeling that said that the fellows did not know just at what moment there might be another outbreak. The result was nervous, fretful work—and Marty shook his head wisely and said he had no use for the cage.

By this time the pitchers had their arms in shape to use speed. Marty now taught them a delivery calculated to make a base runner stick close to his bag. Jerome was instructed with Steele and King, but somehow many of the fellows awoke to the fact that Jerome wasn't receiving much attention from the coach.

Cross reported to Danny that the pitcher was worried. Danny went to his room.

"Look here, Jerry," he said, "you know that Marty has peculiar ways, don't you—I mean peculiar to us fellows?"

"Yes," said Jerome.

"Now if Craig wasn't paying much attention to you, you'd say that that meant you hadn't much chance. Right?"

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"Right."

"But Marty doesn't do things Craig's way. Does he now?"

"He doesn't," said Cross grimly.

Danny flashed him a look. "None of that, Cross." The captain turned back to Jerome. "Does he, Jerry?"

"No."

"Then you can't reason things out the way you could if Craig was here. You see that, don't you?"

"Y—yes."

"Of course you do. Why, look here, Jerry, Marty hops on a man who doesn't fill the bill. He hasn't said anything to you, has he?"

"No."

"Well, did you hear what he said to Tal and Dut that day in the cage?"

Yes, Jerome had heard. He took heart. And next day in the cage he pitched to Dutton as though he was going to go to the school team as soon as the real outdoor work started.

King, burly and strong, and Steele, with his

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habit of winning a game he thought he couldn't lose, were decent to Jerome. They knew that they were receiving the bulk of Marty Black's attention, but they did not speak of it in the Yard nor did they speak of it to each other. They were of the clean, square type. They kept telling Jerome that he was better than he had been a year ago, and they secretly wondered what the coach proposed to do with him.

The day came when Marty brought a piece of board, shaped like a home plate, and threw it down on the floor of the cage.

"Let them shoot for control," he told Dutton.

"Straight balls or curves?" the catcher asked.

"Oh, not many curves."

So Dutton began calling for the ball high and low, outside corner and in. That first day Marty did not come near the pitchers, and Jerome did fairly well—so well in fact that Dutton walked back to the dormitory with him and kept telling him that his control was becoming quite healthy and fat.

"Two weeks outdoors, Jerry," said the catcher,

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"and I'll be able to hold up my glove and close my eyes."

Jerome gave a nervous, pleased laugh. "You're fooling me, Dut."

"I'm not," said Dutton stoutly.

So, when next Jerome pitched with Steele and King in the cage, he had an ounce of confidence in his makeup. Marty Black came over that day and watched. The coach stayed all the while Steele and King worked, and gave directions. Then Jerome started and he yawned. A minute or so later he walked away.

Danny had seen the action. His hot blood prompted him to protest, but he held his peace. What good would it do? He'd have to wait until Marty saw fit to notice the hurler.

"He didn't give me any directions, did he?" Jerome asked Dutton after the practice.

"He didn't have to," said Dutton quickly. "Your control's coming strong, Jerry."

In fact the boy had shown a better mastery of the ball than he had ever displayed in the past. At that there were times when he was as wild as

a March day. But in the main he showed signs of improvement. Dutton said as much to Danny.

"When is Marty Black going to notice this fellow?" he demanded bluntly.

"Marty knows the game," said Danny. "He'll take Jerome in hand when things are right."

"Well," Dutton insisted, "when are they going to be right?"

Danny did not try to answer the question.

"Look here," said the catcher. "It won't do any harm if *I* talk to Marty, will it?"

Danny felt a sense of panic. "What will you say to him?"

"Oh, I'll ask him to watch Jerome."

Danny sighed with relief. No, it wouldn't do any harm to say just that much. He told his roommate to go ahead, but not to argue.

"If Marty says wait until we go outdoors," he warned, "you keep still and wait."

Dutton nodded.

Next afternoon, as Marty came from the dressing room, a voice halted him:

"Can I have a minute, Marty?"

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The coach turned and found Dutton alongside him. "Blaze away, young fellow. What can I do for you?"

"Would you mind looking Jerome over this afternoon?"

Marty stared at the boy a moment. Abruptly he turned away. "I'll give him a look," he said.

Gleefully Dutton whispered the good news to Danny. The captain made up his mind that when Marty came down to survey Jerome he would be near to hear what was said.

So, while King and while Steele pitched, Danny stayed within earshot. But Marty Black did not come near these hurlers. Then Jerome started to work. A few minutes later Marty came down the cage and stopped. Jerome had the ball in his hands and was all prepared to pitch.

"Well, old horse," said the coach, "how are you? Still as wild as ever?"

Jerome pitched—and the ball sailed ten feet over Dutton's head.

CHAPTER V

JEROME GETS A CHANCE

WHILE Dutton was chasing the ball down to the end of the cage Danny walked off toward the dressing-rooms. He was so disgusted and outraged at the moment that he did not dare trust himself to remain. He had pleaded for no knocking in the squad. Couldn't Marty see the damage he was doing? Couldn't the man say an encouraging word once in a while? These were not professional players who had to be whipped into line. They were boys, and they had to be treated as boys.

Danny, as he walked away, decided that he would dress and get out. But he thought better of this. Marty might say more unwise things, and perhaps he had better remain. He walked

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back to where Jerome stood waiting for the ball that Dutton had not yet returned.

Danny suspected that the catcher was purposely delaying in order that the pitcher might steady down. Jerome's face was flushed, and he looked as though he wanted to cry. Marty was standing in an attitude of weariness. He winked at Danny with an air of having known all along that Jerome was just such a pitcher. The captain swallowed hard.

"Accidents will happen, Jerry," he said. "The best of them wild-pitch at times. Chesbro of the Yankees once threw away an American League pennant with a wild pitch."

"But Chesbro was a good pitcher," Jerome faltered.

"So are you," said Danny, and looked at Marty. The coach said nothing.

But despite the captain's encouragement Jerome did not regain the form he had been showing. He kept missing the plate two pitches out of every three. Finally, when Danny told him gently that that was enough for one day, he hurried past

CAPTAIN DANNY

Marty to the dressing-room without a word. Dutton followed at his heels.

"These wild birds never get tame, Cap," said the coach. "Of course it's all right for you to tell him he can pitch——"

"Why didn't you tell him something like that?" Danny flared.

"Me?" Marty asked in surprise. "That's not my style. I don't believe in sugar and water. I never saw a nine that amounted to a rap that wasn't rough and ready. If a fellow has to be babied, what is he going to do when a pitcher sticks the ball around his chin? Why, Cap, he'd throw his bat away and run for the dressing-room."

"But a word of encouragement——" Danny began.

"You can't give a pitcher control by talking to him," Marty interrupted. "He has it or he hasn't. No two ways of looking at it. This bird is as wild as a Kansas cyclone, and if you've ever seen a Kansas cyclone——"

"I haven't," said Danny. He began to walk toward the dressing-room.

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"Well," Marty said, undisturbed, "you haven't missed much."

Danny knew that Dutton would be waiting for him in the room. Nor was he disappointed. The catcher glared wrathfully.

"That was raw," he burst out.

"Oh, Marty didn't mean anything by it," Danny defended.

"Of course he didn't," cried Dutton. "He never means anything. Why, if Craig was here, Craig would be talking to Jerry like a Dutch uncle. Craig would be tickled all over to see Jerry's control coming around. But Marty Black——"

"How did he know it would upset Jerry?" Danny cried, fishing wildly for something to say that would turn the bitterness of his roommate's speech. "I'll bet Marty only meant it as a joke."

"It was a joke, too, wasn't it?" Dutton asked with a sorrowful shake of his head. "Why, Jerry had been going pretty good. Then—zingo—I couldn't have reached it with a ladder."

Danny, in the hope that he might end the argument, started to wash his hands. The door

opened suddenly and Cross, the first-baseman, came in.

"What's Marty jumping on Jerry for?" he demanded. "The poor kid's all gone to pieces."

Danny dried his hands wearily. "Marty didn't mean——"

"Rats!" said Cross. "He's been giving King and Steele all kinds of attention and has been walking away whenever Jerry works. If that's fair——"

"Cross!" said Danny sharply.

The first-baseman stared at the floor. "All right, Danny," he said. "I deserved that. I don't mean he's unfair. But he isn't handling us fellows right."

"He doesn't mean anything," said Dutton briskly. "He thinks we'll take what he says just as a matter of form—like a real ball player would take it as part of the game. He means all right, Cross."

Danny stared at his roommate. Was this the Dutton who had been growling angrily but a few moments before? The first-baseman departed

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after the captain had assured him again that Jerry would get a chance to show his worth. Then Danny turned to the catcher.

"Oh, cut it," said Dutton. "Don't begin any thanks for saying that to Cross. I'll tell you what I think right in your ear. But I know what you're up against and I'm not making things any harder for you. And now just hold your ear for this: I don't think Marty Black fits."

"He'll have us all shouting for him before the finish," Danny said loyally. "He knows baseball——"

"Of course he does," the catcher answered scornfully. "He knows too much baseball. When he tries to tell us it's like beating eggs with an oar."

The news of what Marty had said to Jerome had spread, and in the next few days Danny was conscious of a feeling of dissatisfaction in the squad. It was an undercurrent of feeling. It could scarcely be analyzed. It did not show itself on the surface. But all the time it was there, and all the time it ate into the hearts of the candidates.

CAPTAIN DANNY

So February dragged along. Marty, misinterpreting the attitude of the boys, decided that they were tired of the forlorn cage. Up to this point he had kept his thoughts from all but Danny. Now he began to hint that not only was the time wasted, but that he would have to undo most of the work when they got outdoors. Some of the fellows believed this, and others did not know exactly what to believe. All in all things seemed to be in a sorry mess, and Danny longed for the day when they could get out to the field. Once there, he thought, much of the trouble would disappear.

With the end of the first week of March the weather turned considerably warmer. Danny began to be hopeful. Then for no apparent reason it turned cold. Snow fell for twenty-four hours, and there was a foot on the ground. The captain, in disgust, called off that day's practice.

That snow, however, was winter's end. There followed five days of warmth and slush, and then the snow was gone. Spring came in with a nod and a smile, and settled gently over Manor Hall.

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The grass turned green. And on March 17th the nine for the first time went outdoors.

The first days out were trying, but nobody noticed that. The ground was so soft that it was difficult to run, and the ball burrowed into the soft soil wherever it fell. Yet the squad managed to get quite a lot of practice.

Marty, holding to his viewpoint that it was impossible to get a line on the fellows in the cage, had not reduced his squad. Now he cut viciously. A whole string of boys cleaned out their lockers. And in the evening conferences he held with Danny, he began to say that the nine didn't seem as though it would be overstrong at any point.

"Look here, Marty," Danny argued, "your viewpoint is wrong. You're used to the fast play of the leagues. What we do here looks slow to you. We can't say offhand that this or that fellow won't do. It seems to me that it's up to us to make players out of what we have, and not to abandon a fellow just because he doesn't seem to hit it off at the start."

"Maybe I do expect too much, Cap," Marty

said thoughtfully. His concern was so real that Danny, thinking this an opportune time, said eagerly:

"Let me talk to you about Jerome, Marty. He has better curves than either Steele or King. Passing batters has been his big weakness. Look over last year's records. He never was hit hard. It ought to be possible to get him to put the ball over."

"Those wild birds—" the coach began.

"How is he ever going to get control unless somebody takes him in hand?" Danny interrupted.

"These pitchers," Marty answered, "who throw them over a catcher's head— Oh, well, I'll try to forget that. I haven't much confidence, but I'll try to teach him."

"I know you could," Danny said eagerly, "if you'd try."

The captain left that conference feeling decidedly better. Marty's expression that perhaps he had been expecting too much sounded like the beginning of better things. It gave Danny cour-

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age to fight what dissatisfaction still remained in the squad.

For, despite the activity of the outdoor work, there were still some of the fellows who murmured against the coach. They remembered his sarcasm in the cage, and what he had said to Jerome.

Danny thought that the best way to overcome this feeling was to make a point of showing that he and Marty were great friends. He began to make sure that he and the coach always came on the field together, and always left it together, too. He deferred to Marty in the practice, and on the whole things began to look decidedly better.

By this time the ground had lost its soggianness. The play became brisk and lively. Talmage, at third, speedily showed Marty that he was not the show-off kind. Marty told Danny that he was mistaken about Talmage. Marty, in fact, seemed to have developed a new disposition. Perhaps it was because he was getting a lot of healthy outdoor exercise instead of wandering around an indoor cage.

CAPTAIN DANNY

But with respect to the pitchers the coach did not alter to any great extent. He tried hard to give Jerome a fair chance, but he could not altogether overcome his prejudice. For a while Jerome was nervous and flustered. After a time, however, seeing that this man who had played big league ball did not bite him, the boy began to take heart. He got just a shade better in his control, and then, with a little more practice, just a shade better again. Dutton told Danny that the pitcher was coming back.

"If Marty would go out there with a happy way of encouraging him," the catcher hinted, "you'd see an improvement that would knock your eye out."

"But he is improving, isn't he?" Danny demanded.

"That's because he isn't being bothered," Dutton retorted.

"Well," Danny grinned, "Marty won't bother him again, I guess. He—he's changed, Dut, isn't he?"

"A lot," said the catcher with conviction. "The

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fellows are delighted. I know. They'll tell me things they wouldn't tell you."

Another week passed, and the 'Varsity began to take form. Three days before the opening game with Mt. Merry Academy, Marty and Danny posted the batting order after a lengthy conference. It said:

Cross,	first base.
Chapman,	left field.
Phipps,	second base.
Baggs,	center field.
Talmage,	third base.
Lee,	shortstop.
Farrell,	right field.
Dutton	} catchers.
or	
Orth	
Jerome	} pitchers.
Steele	
King	

It was a team of veterans with the exception of Farrell. And Farrell, a sophomore, went back to the dormitory building that evening with his head in the clouds.

CAPTAIN DANNY

None of the boys doubted that Dutton would catch the opening game. But who would pitch?

This was a question that bothered Danny. The day after the batting order was posted, he and Marty spent almost an hour watching Jerome, Steele and King. Jerome showed pretty good form, but the captain did not give him a thought. On the way back to the locker room after practice Marty said:

“King’s the bird to stop Mt. Merry, Cap.”

Danny nodded. “Yes, I guess King is our man.”

But that night word came to him that Mt. Merry had a sorry nine. And at once his mind jumped to Jerome.

The pitcher was improving. Mt. Merry would probably prove easy. Why not jump Jerome into the box? A victory would give him confidence, and with confidence there was no telling just how effective he would become. It seemed to Danny like mighty good logic. He was resolved that if next day Jerry warmed up well the assignment to pitch the opening game would be his.

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So next afternoon Danny kept close to the pitchers. When the 'Varsity infield practiced, a substitute was at second base. Danny's interest was so great, especially while Jerome worked, that Marty Black strolled out that way.

"Anxious about King, Cap?" the coach asked.

"No," Danny answered. "I'm watching Jerome."

"What for?"

"I think I'll pitch him to-morrow. Word came from a graduate last night that Mt. Merry is easy. If Jerome can get away with the game it will give him heart, and heart is what he needs just now. Anyhow, we didn't announce King, so nobody will know that we've made a switch."

"I can't see this Jerome," said Marty.

"Well," Danny conceded, "it would be crazy to send him against a good nine, but against Mt. Merry——"

"We'll pitch King," said Marty.

"We'll pitch Jerome," Danny said distinctly. "I'm the captain, and it's up to me who plays."

"And I'm the coach," said Marty, "and the

coach is the same as a manager, and the captain has nothing to do but direct the play on the field."

"This isn't the big league," Danny retorted. "The fellows elected me and I'm responsible. We're going to need Jerry before the season's over, and now's the time to get him in shape. He's going to pitch."

The man and the boy were out of earshot of the pitchers. But King and Steele were looking at them, and so was Dutton. The 'Varsity infield had momentarily stopped the practice and was beginning to watch. All over the field there was a tightening that said that the squad guessed that something had gone wrong.

"This isn't the place for any more talk," said Marty curtly. "I'll see the athletic committee."

Danny, without a word, ran toward the infield. He would try to lull any suspicion that there had been trouble.

"Take the pitchers, Marty," he called over his shoulder. Then to the infielders: "Lively, now. Come in on the grass. Who's hitting? You, Orth? Keep the ball on the ground. Three on

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the bases and none out. Get the ball home, fellows!"

The infield, pretending that the bases were all occupied, crept away in. Orth tossed the ball into the air and slashed it at Talmage. Tal made a one-hand pickup, and drove the leather home.

Danny danced on one foot. "That's the stuff. Still three on. Lively, fellows."

Out of the corner of one eye he could see Marty directing the pitchers. He was sorry that the clash had come, and he began to blame himself. He kept calling to the players, but his brain worked rapidly on another subject. Why had he not been more diplomatic? Perhaps if he had coaxed a bit— He shook his head. Something told him that coaxing would have done no good. Marty had decided long before the cage practice that Jerome would not do. Even a few minutes ago the coach had refused to listen.

There was a spirit of fair play in Danny that objected to so high-handed a method. If Jerome had been given a fair chance and then had been turned down the case would have been different.

CAPTAIN DANNY

But to be cast aside without a hearing— That was not the way to treat a fellow.

“Let Marty go to the athletic committee,” Danny muttered. “I know I’m right and I’m going to hold my ground. We must develop Jerry. Suppose anything should happen to Steele or to King?”

Meanwhile Marty was gloomily watching the pitchers.

“These rich kids who go to boarding school have things too much their own way,” he reflected. Not for a moment did he doubt the wisdom of the course he had taken with respect to Jerome. Hadn’t he seen enough giddy pitchers to know the breed? Once in a while one of these harum-scarum twirlers might become respectable, but when that happened the event was a miracle.

After a while the coach moved away toward the locker room. For the benefit of the squad he called, “I’m going in, Cap.” Danny waved his hand. Marty ran lightly across the outfield.

After he was dressed he crossed the athletic field to the Yard. Pilgrim, the student member

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of the athletic committee, was on the dormitory steps.

"Can I see you, young fellow?" Marty asked.

Pilgrim jumped up. "Certainly," he said. "Come up to my room."

Marty tramped upstairs. As soon as they were in the room Pilgrim dragged a chair over to the cool window.

"Sit there, Marty," he said. "Now, what is it? Any trouble?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"This Captain Phipps is kicking over the beans and trying to run things. We had a row this afternoon. He won't let me pitch——"

"Oh, just a minute," Pilgrim pleaded in distress. "I guess this is going to be too much for me, Marty. Let's go over and see Professor Serviss. He's the faculty member of the committee."

So they tramped from the Yard off to Professor Serviss's home. The instructor, as Pilgrim had done, made Marty comfortable at a window.

"No trouble, I hope," he said with a smile.

"Danny Phipps and Marty have had a row," Pilgrim answered.

"Ah!" said Professor Serviss gravely. He looked at Marty. "Will you tell me just what happened, Mr. Black?"

"Marty," said the coach. "Just plain Marty. That's what the boys call me. Why, as to this trouble, I picked King yesterday to pitch against Mt. Merry. Cap, he agreed. But to-day he says that Jerome will pitch, and he goes on to tell me that we'll need Jerome later and that he must get his courage up by beating Mt. Merry. Now, I think this Jerome is so wild——"

"What did you say when Mr. Phipps suggested Jerome?" the Professor interrupted.

"I said there was nothing doing and that King would pitch."

"And what did Mr. Phipps say to that?"

"He told me that Jerome would work, and that he had the say and that I didn't."

"Was Mr. Phipps impudent?"

"Well, no. But he was mighty stubborn."

JEROME GETS A CHANCE

Pilgrim gave a ghost of a smile. Professor Serviss nodded.

"I see. What was it you wanted to know, Mr. Black?"

"I want to know what's what."

The Professor stared thoughtfully at the ceiling as though he were choosing his words.

"The school has a saying," he began, "that the captain is king. That saying has been a part of the school ever since organized athletics came in. We back it up. If a poor captain is elected, the boys suffer; but as they elect him, and as it is entirely up to them, they are not apt to make that mistake twice in succession."

"Look here," said Marty, "have these captains been bucking Craig?"

Pilgrim looked uncomfortable. But Professor Serviss answered calmly:

"In the main, the captains have deferred to Mr. Craig, and I presume that his word has been law in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. It must be remembered, however, that Mr. Craig has been here so long that he is really one of the

boys. But the fact remains that a captain can overrule Mr. Craig at any time. We realize that you have had great experience, and we hope Captain Phipps will make the most of that experience. Nevertheless, we are bound by school tradition. The captain is the final authority."

"Do you mean," Marty demanded, rather stung, "that the captain has more authority than the athletic committee or the faculty?"

"So far as handling his nine is concerned, yes, and provided there is no interference with the rules and regulations of the school. The school, of course, owns the grounds, and if anything were done that displeased the faculty, the boys could be forbidden to play. So that after all the faculty has the final authority, but such authority would never be exercised unless to prevent play altogether."

Marty's face wore a look of vast surprise. "Well, this is a funny note," he said. "I thought I was hired to coach this team. I didn't expect to have any kid telling me how's how."

"From what you have told me," Professor Ser-

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viss observed, "I do not see as Captain Phipps has interfered with the coaching. He has merely exercised his right to pick the team that takes the field."

"It's the same thing," said Marty.

"I am sorry you look at the matter in that light," the professor said gravely. "It is the wish of the committee that harmony prevail. Personally I think that Captain Phipps is inclined to listen to reason. However, you asked the question as to what the captain's authority is, and I have been obliged to answer you. Now, is there anything else, Mr. Black?"

"Nothing," said Marty.

He walked back to the Yard with Pilgrim. The baseball practice was over, and some of the baseball players were loitering near the dormitory steps. Marty went off to his lodgings, and Pilgrim made his way to Danny's room. He was glad to find the captain alone.

"Marty has been to see Professor Serviss," the visitor announced.

Danny nodded. "He told me he was going."

CAPTAIN DANNY

Pilgrim came closer. "Look here, Danny, can't you let King pitch for the sake of peace?"

"I can't," said Danny. "I've told Jerry he's to go in. Anyway, I'd pitch him if I hadn't told him. It isn't that I'm bull-headed. I know Jerome, with control, will make our best pitcher. Just between you and me, Craig thinks so, too. We're going to need Jerry later. How are we going to play fifteen games with only Steele and King?"

"All right," said Pilgrim. "But can't you pitch Jerry in the second game?"

"No. If I must use him, what's the use of sending him in against a tough proposition if I can get him away to a good start? I'm not fighting Marty. He's all right, but he can't see that we're only boys and have to be handled differently than men."

"You wouldn't cross Craig this way," Pilgrim grumbled.

"I wouldn't have to," said Danny. "Craig understands Manor Hall and he understands us. He'd be pitching Jerry to-morrow, and he

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wouldn't be going around asking him if he were as wild as ever."

Pilgrim scratched his head. "All right, Danny. Maybe you know best."

"I think what I'm doing is for the best," Danny answered. "I'm looking further ahead than this one game."

After Pilgrim had gone, Dutton came in.

"There's a rumor that you and Marty have had a row," he announced. He looked keenly at his roommate.

"Nothing to it," Danny answered promptly.

"I don't know about that," the catcher said wisely. "You and Marty had an argument on the field and the fellows think it was about Jerome."

"It wasn't," Danny cried quickly.

"Then what was it about?"

Danny was trapped. "Dut," he confessed miserably, "if you breathe a word about this I'll have a bat bouncing on your head. Marty wanted to pitch King, and I picked Jerome. He went to Professor Serviss about it. That's how things stand now."

CAPTAIN DANNY

"Was he nasty about it?"

"Oh, no. Only he thought that he was the boss and that I had nothing to say. He means all right, Dut, only he can't seem to understand the way things run here."

"Well," Dutton observed, "he had better get to understand things, or else there'll be a crash some place. Some of the fellows saw him pick up Pilgrim, and then they saw him and Pilgrim walk to Professor Serviss's house. Then that talk you had with him and your naming Jerry to pitch, and everybody knowing how he acts toward Jerry— The fellows just about put two and two together."

Danny dropped into a chair. "There's trouble every way I turn," he groaned. "I suppose when Jerome hears the talk he'll go higher than a kite."

And that was exactly what happened to the pitcher. At supper he looked across the dining hall at Danny with a harassed expression in his eyes. On the way out of the hall Danny whispered to Dutton:

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"You get after the fellows and convince them there's no trouble."

"Where are you going?" the catcher demanded.

"I want to see Jerry."

An hour later the captain came from Jerome's room. Out in the corridor he mopped his face. He had argued, and argued, and argued, and though he had steadied the pitcher a bit, he knew that he had not convinced him.

Next day Danny went to the locker room feeling that Marty might show that they had differed. The captain knew from Dutton that the nine, after pondering the situation, was not at all sure that there had really been a row. Therefore, if the coach was to arrive with a laugh and a smile, the situation could indeed be bettered.

In a spirit of apprehension the nine dressed for the game. For the first time that season the school cheers sounded from the stands, but the cheers didn't seem to make the players take heart.

And then Marty came in. He stopped for a moment to ask Baggs if he had many hits in his

bat that day. Baggs answered seriously that he hoped so. Then the coach came down the room.

"Hello, Cap," he called as though nothing had happened.

Danny felt a load taken from his mind. "Look at Jerry's arm, will you, Marty?" he asked.

It was a good play. It did much to convince the squad that this talk of trouble about Jerome had been colored too strongly. Would Danny ask Marty to look at Jerry's arm if the coach was opposed to the pitcher?

But Jerome—high-strung, sensitive Jerome—could not regain his poise as quickly as the others. He went out to the field, after Marty had gently massaged his muscles, with his nerves far from steady. He warmed up with Dutton, and several times the catcher had to stretch to prevent the ball going past him. The stands murmured at this display of wildness, and the sound came to the boy's ears. He saw Marty leaning out from the bench and watching him.

Danny, conscious that the coach's stare was

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doing damage, waved all the pitchers to the bench. Marty strolled out to him.

"They didn't have much warm-up, Cap."

Danny mumbled a reply. Marty went back to the bench with the air of a martyr resigned to his fate. Here, he thought, was a kid with absolute power and yet he didn't know the importance of a proper warm-up for a pitcher. The coach sat down beside Jerome.

"How's the arm? Limber?"

"Y—yes, sir," the pitcher answered.

"I was watching you out there. That out-curve goes out too far. Never mind any fancy pitching. You just lay the ball over."

"He's afraid I'm wild," thought the unstrung boy. "He thinks I'll go up in the air. He wants me to pitch so they'll hit me. He's relying on the fielders. He has no confidence in me. Of course that's what he and Danny must have had a fight about. He didn't want me to——"

And then the bell rang for the start of the game.

Danny's information had been right. Mt.

CAPTAIN DANNY

Merry was easy, and the Green and White hammered out twelve runs. But poor Jerome had a nightmare of an afternoon, and the enemy scored eight times. Four of these runs were the results of bases on balls, and another tally came in on a wild pitch. Mt. Merry's batters waited him out inning after inning, and the end of the game found the pitcher tired and weary and disgusted.

When the last man was out the squad trotted to the locker room. It did not romp with the joy that victory generally brings. Marty Black closed his score book and stared after the fellows. Next he glanced at Danny.

"Well, Cap," he asked mildly, "wouldn't it have been just as well to have used King?"

The captain did not answer. How could any pitcher, he wondered, have done good work under the circumstances?

CHAPTER VI

ANOTHER SETBACK

THERE wasn't much talking in the locker room while the fellows dressed. Jerome held away from all but Cross, his roommate. Danny, hurrying into his clothes, got away from the place as soon as he could. He didn't feel that he wanted any supper. He walked out into the country until the twilight came, and then he tramped back. It was quite dark when he crossed the Yard and went to his room.

Dutton, who was studying, glanced sharply at the captain. "Have any supper?" he asked.

Danny shook his head.

"Hungry?"

"No."

CAPTAIN DANNY

Dutton tossed aside a book. "I don't blame you. The fellows are knocking Jerome."

"What are they saying?"

"That it's the same old story of no control, and that every game he pitches will be in danger. And—and there's talk again that you and Marty did have a row about Jerome, and some of the fellows feel—feel— Oh, I'd like to punch their heads."

"How do they feel?" Danny demanded.

"They think that Marty was right and you were wrong."

The catcher expected his roommate to sulk. But Danny dropped into a chair and grinned cheerfully.

"Dut," he said, "that's great news. If they think Marty is right, why they'll pull in with him better than ever. This is the best thing that has happened in a month."

"But when they think you don't know anything about the game, what then?" Dutton cried in alarm.

"Oh, they don't think I know nothing. They think Marty knows more than I do—and he does,

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too. Anyway, what difference does it make what they think about me if they'll come through with a good season and trounce Monroe?"

Dutton shook his head. "I couldn't be as easy as that," he muttered.

However, if Danny was delighted with the way the squad felt toward Marty, he was far from pleased with the feeling toward Jerome. He knew that the Mt. Merry game had absolutely convinced the coach that the boy was hopeless. He knew that the squad thought that Jerry was weak. Yet deep in his mind was the conviction that Jerry could be moulded. Why, Mt. Merry had only secured four hits. It was passes and a wild pitch that had done the business. If control ever came to Jerry there would be nothing to the games he pitched but victory.

Sunday afternoon Danny went boldly to Marty's lodgings. He said bluntly that he had not lost faith in Jerome. He pointed out the four hits.

"How can you hit a pitcher who doesn't put them over the plate?" the coach asked.

CAPTAIN DANNY

Danny brushed the argument aside. What he wanted was somebody to take Jerry in hand and coach him—not as King and Steele were drilled, but with a deeper, steadier, more watchful supervision.

“Will you take him in hand, Marty?” the boy asked.

“Anything you say, Cap,” Marty answered. His tone showed that he had little faith in the plan, and that he would take Jerome because he had been asked to, and for no other reason. Danny was quite sure that there would be none of that magnetic quality of sympathy in the coaching that came to the young pitcher.

For four days Marty spent an hour each afternoon with Jerome. He took him away off to the outfield and there tried to give him some idea of control. At the end of that time Danny, who had purposely remained away from these sessions, walked out to see the result. If Jerome was no better he was half inclined to try to coach the pitcher himself.

The captain stood behind Marty. The coach

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held his glove as a target and signalled for the kind of ball he wanted. Jerome threw.

"Ball one," Marty droned.

Again Jerome pitched.

"Ball two." Marty straightened up wearily.

Danny could see that Jerome was flustered, and was throwing wildly. Holding the ball, Marty walked down a few steps.

"You're in the hole now, Jerry," he said. "When you're in the hole with two balls and no strikes, don't put it over right in the middle and waist high. That's just what the batter is waiting for. He'll knock the cover off the ball. Give him an 'in' across the shoulder or a high 'out' that he'll reach for. Now we'll start again. Give me that high 'in.' "

Jerome pitched, and the ball came waist high over the center of the plate.

"There it goes," said Marty, "for a three-bagger. Any batter would kill that. Can't you give me a high 'in'? Try again."

Jerome kept trying, and all the while his control grew worse. At last Danny turned away and

CAPTAIN DANNY

walked back toward the infield. That evening Marty said to him:

"You were out there to-day, Cap. You see how it is yourself. If control was worth a million dollars an ounce, that fellow couldn't sell five cents' worth."

"Suppose—suppose I try him for a while?" Danny asked. He did not want Marty to think that he was finding fault. To his relief the coach told him to go ahead. Marty had the appearance of a man getting away from a job that he was glad to see the last of.

Next day Danny came from the locker room behind Jerome. He fell into step beside the pitcher and walked with him to the outfield. He pulled on a big mitt.

"Now, Jerry," he said briskly, "I'm going to catch you, and we'll get this thing right."

"It's no use," Jerome faltered. "I can't get them over."

"You don't try."

"Don't try? I've tried until I don't know how to try any more."

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"Look here, now," Danny said gently, "let's get this straightened out. Doesn't it seem to you as though you can put that ball where you want it to go?"

Jerome shook his head. "I'm pitching worse now than I was in the cage. I don't feel that I have anything, either."

"That's because you're discouraged."

"Who wouldn't be discouraged?" the boy blurted. "Some of the fellows are saying——"

"Never mind what anybody says," Danny soothed. "We'll cut out this pitching for the rest of the week. You just loaf. Don't even come to the field unless you feel like coming. Take a rest. Next Monday you and I will start in with a new deal. We'll see if we can't get that ball over, Jerry."

"Maybe I could if *you'd* catch me," said Jerome. He went back to the dressing-room feeling less discouraged.

As for Danny, his freckled fists itched to let fly at somebody's jaw. He had begged the boys to do no knocking, and here they were pounding

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mercilessly. Common sense told him that he would only make matters worse if he fought with them. Yet he itched to make things warm for the gossips.

Saturday came the second game, and Seward School was Manor Hall's opponent. King was sent in to pitch, and he won by a score of 9 to 3. Seward had a small, light nine, and King's burly speed kept her players away from the plate. Marty, on the bench, delighted in King's showing. On the way back to the locker room he said to Danny:

"Pick the right pitchers, Cap, and you'll seldom be in trouble. Now, this King did some fine pitching to-day, and he had that team buffaloed. He gave one base on balls."

It was on the tip of Danny's tongue to point out that King had been peppered for seven hits, but he held his peace. What was the use of replying to what was plainly a hit at Jerome? He'd take Jerry in hand Monday, and perhaps he'd be able to do what had baffled the coach. If he failed— Well, it wouldn't be be-

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cause he didn't have the right spirit for the task.

Over Sunday Danny tried to reason out what to do. He proved to his own satisfaction that a pitcher trying to put the ball over the plate has a tendency to over-aim. As Danny saw it, at the moment of delivery the pitcher checked his arm swing and tried to aim with his fingers. This last-second motion tended to bring the ball lower than the point at which it was originally aimed.

This, to Danny's mind, accounted for the fact that Jerome, called on by Marty for a shoulder ball, almost always sent the leather around the waist. Then, too, aiming an in-shoot with the fingers at the last moment just as the ball was leaving one's hand generally carried the ball too far in.

Furthermore, Danny felt that the shoulder ball, despite its popularity among pitchers, was a bad ball to serve, particularly if it came on the inside. Such balls, he reasoned, are generally frowned on by the umpires, so that the chances of having a shoulder ball called a strike were slim.

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Why, then, coach Jerome to pitch such a delivery? What was the use of it?

Why not, if Jerry used that last-second finger aim, call for a waist ball? Jerry, aiming for the waist, would get the ball across right above the knees. This would be a hard ball to hit, and if the batter did not offer at it, it would be called a strike.

So, when Monday afternoon came, Danny went forth with a plan that was altogether different from that which Marty had used. That day he worked with Jerome on straight balls and held his glove as a target.

"See," said the pitcher, "I always get the ball in lower than the mitt."

Danny explained to him the principle of over-aiming.

"Do I do that?" the pitcher asked; "do I over-aim?"

Danny nodded. "I think so."

"I'll watch that then," said the boy.

"Oh, hold on there," Danny cried. "I don't want you to change your style. You'd have to

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start all over again if you did that. We'll stick to the system you have."

"That's what I mean," said Jerome. "I want to watch how it works."

Danny held the glove up. The pitcher shot at an imaginary mark far above the glove. And the ball plunked into the hollow of the mitt. Jerome's eyes opened.

"That's right," he called to Danny. "It worked that time."

For an hour they experimented. At the end Jerry was delighted. Here, he thought, was control about to come to him at last. His face was so radiant when he came to the locker room that Dutton pulled Danny aside.

"What's the good news with Jerry?" he whispered.

"We're working on a new system," Danny said, "and it looks as though he's going to get all kinds of control."

Dutton carried the news to Cross. The first-baseman made it his business to walk to the Yard with the captain.

"Who's idea was this?" he asked. "Yours or Marty's?"

"Both," Danny said instantly.

Next day Jerome began to use his curves. And the ball, now that he used Danny's system, began to go very nearly where it was expected to go. He began to get confidence in himself. Danny went forward a lesson in his course of pitching.

"Never mind pitching for the shoulder, Jerry," he said, "when you find yourself in a hole. Start that ball for the waist——"

"But Marty told me to pop for the shoulder in a pinch," Jerome stammered.

Danny smiled. "Marty and I have talked this over. You start that ball for the waist. You'll bring it in above the knees."

"Why," said the pitcher, "that's a tough ball to hit, above the knees."

"Sure it is," said Danny. "Try it, now."

Jerome tried. After a while Danny began to call strikes and balls. But this time being in the hole didn't scare the pitcher. He plunked that ball above the knees, and generally he got his

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strike. He began to walk about the field as though he were really a life and blood member of the nine, and not as though he were dead weight.

The third game was with Claussen Academy, and was to be played away from home. Friday afternoon Danny sent Jerome in to pitch against the 'Varsity.

"Never mind your curves, Jerry," he said. "Keep your eye on control."

As a result, Jerome was hit freely. After the practice Marty said:

"I thought they couldn't hit him, Cap?"

"He's after control now," said Danny. "Weren't many bad balls to-day, were there?"

"He's always just about one thing shy, isn't he?" Marty asked good-naturedly. "This fellow's fooling you, Cap."

Next day the team went to Claussen field by trolley car. Steele had a feeling that this was his day, so he was sent to the mound. He was in trouble almost every inning, but he managed to weather every storm. The end of the game found him an 11 to 5 winner. Manor Hall had hit sav-

CAPTAIN DANNY

agely, and Captain Danny's big black bat had had a generous hand in the slaughter. Steele laughed lightly while he dressed.

"I told you this was my day," he said. "Why, they could have hit me two or three times an inning and we'd have won just the same."

Danny sighed. Why didn't Jerome have confidence like that?

The next game was to be played Wednesday against Creskill Academy. It was an at-home game. Thus far all three of Manor Hall's pitchers had worked in turn. Who would get the next assignment? The fellows hoped secretly that it would not be Jerome. They had scant faith in Jerry.

Monday and Tuesday Danny worked hard with the pitcher. Tuesday afternoon the captain called for curve balls, and Jerry broke seven pitches in a row across the rubber. Danny took off his glove and tossed it into the air.

"That's the candy," he cried. He called the pitcher to him. "How would you like to work to-morrow, Jerry?"

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The boy swallowed hard. "Do you think that—that I'm steady enough?"

"Of course you are. Don't you feel confident?"

"I feel as though I can hold my own," said Jerome.

Later in the afternoon Marty came to Danny. "Who pitches to-morrow, Cap?"

Danny looked up at him. "Have you any choice?"

"You're the boss, Cap. You've been handling Jerome. I don't know how he is now."

"He's good," said Danny. "I'll take a chance with him."

Marty nodded. "Jerome it is then. But—this Creskill has a pretty good record."

"They won't have after to-morrow," said the captain.

In his room, when he got back to the dormitory building, he found this telegram:

Home ten o'clock Wednesday morning. Meet us Westbrook station. Hope you have no game scheduled.

DAD

CAPTAIN DANNY

But there was a game scheduled, and Jerome was slated to pitch it. The captain ran the message through his fingers.

If he went away Marty would be in absolute command of the nine, and with Jerome working—Danny shook his head. He mustn't think that. Marty would give the pitcher loyal support. To-morrow would be a real game, not practice. Any way, he wouldn't let ten ball games keep him from welcoming his father and mother home.

He took the telegram to the school office and secured permission to go home on the morrow. Thursday he would return.

Dutton frowned ominously when he heard that Danny would not be in the Creskill game.

"How about Jerome?" he asked bluntly.

"What about Jerome?" the captain demanded as though here was some unknown question.

"He's been picked to pitch, hasn't he?"

"Sure."

"Well, what then?"

"Nothing," said Dutton. He drummed on the

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study table. "He might not feel right if you're not around."

Danny forced a laugh. "Nonsense. He has his control now, hasn't he? Why shouldn't he feel right?"

Dutton said nothing more. Later Jerome learned that the captain would not be behind him when he went in. He looked frightened at this, but instantly pulled himself together. He had been putting the ball over in practice, and he'd put it over in the game.

"Your nerve's coming back," grinned Cross, his roommate.

"Oh," said Jerome, "I feel now as though I have something on the ball."

At breakfast next morning Cross told Danny what the pitcher had said.

"Of course he has something," the captain cried stoutly. "He'll win his game easily."

"You've done a lot for him," Cross whispered.

"He'll do a lot for the nine," Danny answered.

After breakfast he saw Marty and told him that he was going home on the eight o'clock train.

"All right, Cap," said Marty. "We'll have a victory to report when you come back."

Danny laughed. "Of course you will. And, Marty, see that Jerry gets every chance, will you?"

"Certainly."

"I've been working hard with him, Marty, and if——"

"We'll take care of him," the coach broke in. "You just leave it to me, Cap."

So Danny went home with an easy mind. He welcomed his father and his mother with boisterous joy. They had many trinkets for him that he could take back to school and put up in his room—raw cotton blossoms, for instance, and a small stuffed alligator.

"You never forget me, do you?" he asked. His father laughed, and his mother pinched his cheek.

Next day he started back for school. Classes were in session when he reached Manor Hall. He waited in his room for the noon recess.

His back was turned to the door when Dutton entered the quarters with some books under his

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arm. The catcher dropped the volumes with a bang.

"We won the game," he said briefly.

Danny grinned. "Good! What was the score?"

"Six to two."

"Only two runs? Did Jerry pitch as well as that?"

"He was taken out in the seventh inning," said Dutton.

The captain's mouth opened. "What for?"

"Passing men."

"Passing— Look here, Dut. What was the score when he was yanked?"

"Five to two."

"How many were out?"

"One."

"How many on base?"

"Two."

"And with a three-run lead he was taken out?"

"Yes."

"But——"

"Oh, what's the use of talking this way?" Dut-

CAPTAIN DANNY

ton cried. "Marty said he was going up. He wasn't, Danny. The first man he passed he had struck out earlier on curves. He tried curves again, but the fellow didn't bite, and Jerry couldn't get out of the hole. The second fellow he passed trying to pitch high and stop a bunt. Then Marty pulled him. He wasn't gone, Danny. He was steady and sure of himself. He had his nerve. I could tell by the way the ball came to me."

"Perhaps," said Danny weakly, "he might have been going and you didn't see it."

"Going nothing," Dutton retorted angrily. "I know him like a book."

"How—how did he take it?"

"How would you take it," the catcher demanded, "if you were going good and they handed it to you?"

Danny walked to the window and looked out. After a while he spoke without turning his head:

"Who went in when Jerry came out?"

"King," said Dutton.

Danny shook his head. Something told him

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that Marty had really thought the pitcher was going up, and something told him that he would have to start to work with Jerome all over again. He ran his hands feverishly through his red hair. It wasn't a muddy red; it was a good, honest, hot-tempered red.

And slowly, as the captain stood there, the hot fire of stubborn resolution ran through his blood. He had brought Jerome around once. He had sent him out to pitch, and he had pitched. Well, he'd bring him back again. And next time, the person who robbed the boy of his courage would know that something had broken loose.

CHAPTER VII

UNWELCOME PRAISE

DANNY went down to dinner with a grin on his freckled face. He wasn't going to let the school see that there was a thing in the world wrong. The fellows asked him what he thought of that 6 to 2 victory, and he said the victory was fine. One or two of the boys observed that Marty Black had showed some fine judgment in pulling out Jerome just as he started to wobble, because Jerry was always sure to have one bad inning. They looked keenly at Danny as they said this, but Danny refused to be trapped. He smiled and announced that Marty understood baseball and that this should be a fine day for practice.

After classes that afternoon he hurried to the

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locker room. He didn't want to have Cross coming to him with grumbles and complaints, so he dressed and departed for the field before the first-baseman arrived. Later Marty came out and waved him a good-natured greeting. They sat on the bench with the deserted field ahead of them.

"It was some game, Cap," said the coach. "This boy Baggs can surely hit them on the nose. He drove in four runs and scored one himself."

"Baggs is good," said Danny. He dug the spikes of one foot into the dirt. "How was Jerome?"

"He was pretty good. Of course, these wild birds generally have one good blow-up to the game. So when he passed two in a row I thought his time had come."

"With a three-run lead?" the captain asked.

"The players were getting nervous, Cap. Anybody could see they were thinking, 'Here goes this old ball game.' I was afraid that a couple of hits would go through them. Then where would we have been?"

Here was a new worry. Were the 'Varsity players so apprehensive behind Jerome that the

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feeling hurt their play? Why, if that were the case, the squad would applaud Marty for yanking Jerome, and in time the pitcher would come to see that neither the coach nor the players had confidence in him.

"This wasn't an important game," Danny said slowly. "Wouldn't it have been just as well to have allowed Jerome to fight his way out?"

"Cap," Marty said earnestly, "this nine is just hitting its stride. It hasn't lost a game. A defeat yesterday would have thrown it back. We must think of these things."

"Of course," said Danny. Yet he could not help feeling that if it was worth while to coddle the nine, it might not harm to coddle Jerome a bit. Perhaps a defeat would not have thrown the nine back. Anyway, Jerome had been more than thrown back. He had been routed.

The fellows began to come out on the field. Marty stood up.

"What's the program to-day?" he asked.

"Anything you think they need," said Danny. "I'll take Jerome a while."

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Marty's eyes opened, but he said nothing.

The captain went forward until he met the hurler. He ran his arm through the pitcher's and led him off to the place where they had their daily sessions.

"How's things?" the captain asked.

"All right," Jerome answered. But his face showed distress, and Danny knew it would do no good to pretend that all was well.

"Up in the air because Marty took you out?" he asked.

The pitcher nodded.

"Now look here," said Danny; "let's get this thing straight. You weren't wild, were you?"

"I didn't *feel* wild. I was always sure that I could pull through."

"Then you passed two men. You had a reputation for wildness, Jerry."

"I know that."

"So that Marty got scary and took no chances. But the big point is this: Next time you go in everybody will say, 'He did pretty good in his last game.' And you'll be pretty good in the next,

and soon everybody will forget that you were ever wild. What Marty did doesn't matter, so long as you know you can go in there and pitch."

"But it takes the heart out of you," cried Jerome. "You work, and work, and work. After a while somebody comes along with a new system and you begin to get control. Then you go in for a game. You pitch the best— Honest, Danny, it was the best game I ever worked. When I saw King come out to relieve me I thought it was a joke. I wasn't gone. It takes your heart away. You ask yourself 'what's the use?' "

"Lots of use," Danny cried briskly. "The big trouble with you, Jerry, is— Oh, you know what I mean. You're too easily hurt. Your hide isn't thick enough. You had control yesterday. You still have that control, haven't you?"

"I—I don't know."

"Well, we'll soon find out. Get off there and pitch to me."

The boy obeyed instructions. Yes, he still had his control.

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"There!" cried Danny, some time later. "Didn't I tell you you'd be there?"

"It's still there," Jerome answered without much spirit. "But I guess it's mechanical. I don't feel right inside."

Plainly he was much cast down. However, Danny went back to the infield practice, feeling much encouraged. Jerry had not lost the knack of sticking the ball over. His courage would come back by degrees.

Saturday the nine played Lincoln School. Friday night King banged up one of his fingers. To use him was out of the question. So Steele was sent in to pitch the game. Lincoln wasn't any too strong, but to-day Steele was not chock-a-block with confidence. Several times during the game he wavered, and Lincoln left the field victors by a score of 7 to 2. It was Manor Hall's first defeat of the season.

"Can't win all the time," Marty said philosophically.

The loss of the game, Danny was glad to see, did not discourage the boys. Monday they came

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back to the practice with dash and pepper—and Monday Danny again took Jerome in hand.

Jerry didn't talk about not having heart to-day. He worked his spell, came in for some batting practice, and after that scampered for the locker room.

"He'll be all right," Danny told Dutton. "I won't need him for the next game—King will probably work that."

The catcher gingerly felt one hand. "That boy King has some speed," he said. "If he only knew how to use his noodle——"

"No knocking," said Danny. "He's a good pitcher. Anyway, he beat Seward 9 to 3 the first time, and he ought to repeat."

The nine traveled to play Seward the second time, and won by a score of 10 to 2. On the way home Marty sat alongside Danny.

"That boy King has some whip," he said wisely.

Creskill was next on the schedule. Following the Seward game, Jerome began to work with grim determination. Steele and King had both pitched, so he was due for a turn. Anyhow, he

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had held Creskill to two runs in seven innings, and he felt he would be sent back for another crack. But Steele was picked, and the night before the Creskill game Jerome sat in his room, the most discouraged boy in Manor Hall.

Danny had really meant to use him. The grim spirit that Jerry had shown had been responsible for the change. The captain was afraid that the pitcher would go into the contest too highly strung. He would carry in a load of worry and a fear of failure. Under these circumstances, should he fail, it would be almost impossible to pull him together that season.

Then, too, Marty Black had hinted broadly that if Jerome had held Creskill to two runs, Steele would do better, for wasn't Steele the better pitcher? To these arguments Danny made no reply. He said thoughtfully that Steele would work, and Marty grinned and cried:

"Now, Cap, you're getting to a point where we can do lots of business."

Against Creskill Steele showed a really good game. He was tight in the pinches, and he breezed

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along with a gallant show of confidence. The result was that Creskill lost, 8 to 0, and Manor Hall had her first shutout.

"Didn't I tell you he'd do better than Jerome?" Marty asked Danny.

"Why do you always drag Jerry in?" the captain asked.

"Why?" asked Marty in surprise; "why, I want to show you that this bird has you hypnotized."

A game with Meade Academy was next on the schedule. Meade had a team of sluggers. She had been piling up 10 and 12 and 14 runs to the game. She would be the toughest proposition that the Green and White had yet faced.

Marty, without consulting Danny, began to groom King for this game. He thought that his logic had brought about the selection of Steele against Creskill, and he saw no reason why King should not work the next. Who else was there to use?

But Danny, once the Creskill game was past, started off with Jerome again. This time he worked with painstaking care.

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"Take your time," he kept calling. "Don't hurry, Jerry. Put that ball just where you want it. That's the boy. That's shooting them. Take your time."

He wanted to have Jerry right to the dot. But though the pitcher showed a rare control, he worked with a total lack of warmth. Danny stopped the practice.

"What's wrong, Jerry?" he asked. "Feel all right?"

"Oh, I'm all right," said Jerome. He pulled off his glove and put it on again. "I thought I'd pitch against Creskill," he said slowly.

Oh, so that was it. Ordinarily Danny had no use for the fellow who got sore because he wasn't played. Here, though, was a different situation. Jerry thought he had been kept on the bench because of his old fault, control.

Danny had not intended to reveal his plan for the Meade game. Now he saw that only by speaking could he keep Jerome from passing several discouraged days.

"You told me I was getting better," the pitcher

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continued "and I thought I saw an improvement, too."

"You have improved."

"Then why wasn't I— Oh, I don't mean that, Danny. You'll think I'm kicking."

"I won't," said Danny. He asked abruptly: "What do you think of Meade?"

The pitcher shook his head. "Everybody says that nine can slam the ball like sixty."

"Think you can stop them?"

Slowly the pitcher lifted his eyes. "You mean—you mean you're going to use me in that game?"

"That's what I mean."

Jerome spat in his glove. "Give me another fifteen minutes, Danny," he pleaded. "I want to try my crossfire."

He ran out to his pitching distance. There was a sparkle in his eye. He wasn't the same boy at all. And fifteen minutes later, after he had clipped the plate again and again, he ran off gayly to the showers. In some strange fashion confidence had come to him.

The squad received the news that Jerome would

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pitch with secret shakings of the head. Marty Black was dumfounded.

"Have you been watching King?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Danny.

"And you're set on shooting Jerome at them?"

"Yes."

"All right, Cap," said Marty; "it's your funeral."

King made no comments. If he was disappointed, he was too much of a little gentleman to show his feelings. Danny, after watching King, crossed the Yard from the field with the thought that it was good to be a Manor Hall fellow.

There was a feeling in school that here was a game that would really try the nine. There was a thought in the mind of almost every student that in picking Jerome, Danny was riding for a fall. However, there was no open criticism. But Jerome was not fooled.

"I'm glad the school thinks I'll fail," he told Cross.

The first-baseman bristled. "Who told you you'd fail?"

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"Oh, nobody said so, but I know some of the fellows think it. If everybody thought I'd win, I'd go in afraid I wouldn't. This way I'm not worried. If I lose they can only say that Meade was strong. I'm satisfied."

So was Cross, seeing that his roommate was not worrying.

The Meade game has gone down into Manor Hall history. For some reason the infield went to pieces, and Meade scored three runs in the first two innings. Not a hit had been made off Jerome, not a base on balls had he given. Yet those three runs glared from the score-board. It was a discouraging start.

But the boy did not falter. In the third inning the first batter singled for Meade's first clean hit. The ball got away from Baggs and the runner went all the way to third. Here, said the wise ones, Jerome goes up. But Jerry, with feverish grimness, stayed with his guns. He struck out the next boy, and the following batters popped easy flies to Cross. Jerome came in to the bench, and though the score was

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3 to 0 against him, the stands stood up to cheer.

"Nice work," Danny whispered.

"That's pitching, young fellow," said Marty.

Fighting spirit came to the nine, and in the fourth inning a run came over. Another was scored in the seventh and still another in the eighth. The ninth inning began with the score tied, for Jerome had been going along smoothly.

But in the first half of the ninth he had a momentary attack of his old enemy, wildness. He passed the first two boys. The coaches began to yell, "He's going up!" and it did look that way. Marty wig-wagged from the bench that it was time to put in King. Danny signalled back that Jerome would stay. If the pitcher was to be yanked out every time he got in trouble he'd never have heart.

Danny walked in to the mound. "Take it easy, Jerry. You're all right. Nobody's going to take you out to-day. Don't get worrying. This is your game from start to finish."

"The ball isn't working right," Jerome said nervously.

"It will be in a moment. See that fellow up there? He's anxious to hit. Give him a high fast one."

Jerry had control enough to throw the ball as directed. Danny had read the batter right. He swung at the ball and lifted a high foul that Dutton caught.

"One down," cried Cross. "It's all yours, Jerry."

That out brought back the pitcher's nerve. A moment later the two Meade runners tried a double steal, and Talmage, at third, made brilliant work of Dutton's throw to that corner.

"Out!" said the umpire.

So there were two down and a man on second. The infield moved far back. And the next boy lifted a fly that Baggs caught after a hard run. Manor Hall did not score in the ninth. The tenth inning started. Marty thought that it was a case of which pitcher would crack first. He whispered in Danny's ear that it might be wise to shift to King.

"Could King do any better than Jerry's doing?" Danny asked.

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"But that bird is due for a flight, Cap. See last inning. He passed two and——"

"But they didn't score."

"Luck. Dutton's throw to third probably saved him. He'll pass half a dozen men next inning."

"Give him a chance," said Danny. He was quite sure that after pulling through the ninth Jerry would have a carload of nerve. Nor was he mistaken. The pitcher put Meade away in one-two-three order. Manor Hall came in for its tenth inning.

Baggs was first to bat—and the game ended right there. Baggs caught the second ball pitched on the trade-mark. It sailed away toward the outfield. Marty squinted at it a moment. He stood up and gathered the sweaters.

"Good night," he said. "Game's over." He did not look back to see where the ball would fall.

But Jerome, to whom this hit meant much, watched it with open mouth. He saw it hit far over the center-fielder's head and then bounce away, away, away— Jerome sat down with a grin.

"That's the sweetest home run I ever saw," he announced.

The victory sent a wild wave of enthusiasm through the school. Jerome tasted the cup of popularity, and found the taste good. But Marty Black, with the score-book in his hand, warned Danny of the future.

"Don't put too much faith in this bird, Cap," he advised. "One game doesn't make a pitcher. Look here, he gave five bases on balls. Now if those bases had come about the time a few hits were turned loose——"

"But they didn't," said Danny. "Anybody could see to-day that he was a different pitcher. He used to give passes and then wilt. Now if he gives a pass he sticks to the ship and fights things out."

"All right, Cap," said Marty. "I've done my duty. I've warned you." Privately he thought Danny was a mighty stubborn youngster.

The joyous uproar that followed the game did not please Danny in the least. Thus far his nine had gone along with nobody saying much about it. The boy was satisfied to have things so. He



“Baggs was first to bat”

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didn't want the fellows coming around and convincing his players that they were unbeatable. He knew that an over-confident team quickly stagnates.

But Marty was glad to hear the praise. In fact, the coach helped it along. A confident team, he said, was a team with lots of pepper and dash, a team with lots of get-up-and-get. He announced that he could name two big league managers who had gone through to success because they had convinced second-rate teams that they were unbeatable.

Danny, however, thought that there was a vast difference between a big league team and a team of schoolboys. He went over to Marty's lodgings to plead with the coach to pretend that the nine wasn't doing any too well, and while he was there Keating, the editor of *The Greenie*, came in on them.

"The nine's been going fine, hasn't it?" he demanded with enthusiasm. "I'm going to give the fellows a bangup notice and I thought I'd come over and get a few pointers."

"For the love of Mike, don't do that," Danny cried.

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Keating gasped. "Don't do what?"

"Don't praise the nine. You'll have my boys all swelled up. You'll spoil them. If you want to write anything, rap them a bit."

"Now, Cap," Marty said soothingly.

"I mean it," Danny cried. "I don't believe in praise until there's something to praise about."

"But you've won—" Keating began.

"We haven't won from Monroe yet," said Danny.

Marty smiled indulgently. "You're shooting wild, Cap. You get a bunch feeling strong, and they can't be beaten. I think Keating has the right dope."

"I want to show the nine that the school is behind it," said Keating.

"I don't care whether the school is behind the nine or not," Danny insisted. "I'd rather it wouldn't be yet. The nine hasn't done anything to justify any hip-hip-hurrahing. I want to keep them trying all the time. If they win a game and make seven hits, I want *The Greenie* to tell them that seven or eight hits are not enough. If they

go through a game and make only one or two errors, say that they'd have made more had they tried for the hard chances. Rub it into them all you like; but don't, if you want this nine to pull out, begin using the softsoap."

Marty Black gave a smile of amusement. "You have some queer ideas," he observed.

Keating looked from one to the other. Marty winked at him. That wink told the editor to go as far as he liked. Keating left, convinced that Marty, through his greater experience, knew what was best.

So the next issue of *The Greenie* carried a story that burned red fire for the nine. Within twenty-four hours most of the squad began to strut. Danny felt like punching Keating's head. Dutton scowled and said that he never before knew how many fools were on the nine. Dutton was one boy whose eyes were not blinded to true conditions.

Within another day the practice began to tell a wobbly story. There was a general air of supreme confidence, and with it came what almost always comes with such a condition, a woeful slack-

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ness and carelessness. The boys acted without seriousness. When a player made a wild throw or a muff, his attitude was one that said that he could have performed perfectly had it been necessary, but that this was only practice.

Danny submitted to this for just one afternoon. Then, without consulting Marty, he called the squad together as it was about to start from the field for the locker room.

"If you think you can learn to play baseball by making errors," he began hotly, "you are mightily mistaken. It's what you do every day and what you do here to-day that you're going to do when you get into a big match. This thing of sloppy practice must stop. I want real work or I want no work at all."

The captain's fists were clinched. His face was red with indignation. Yet he knew exactly what he was saying, and kept himself under control.

"You outfielders must cover more ground," he continued. "You must start with the crack of the bat for the place where the ball will fall. If you don't get used to doing that in practice you won't

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do it in a real game. Can't you see that, fellows?"

"I can see it," said Farrell, the right-fielder.

Danny smiled at him. "You're one of the fellows who hasn't loafed, Farrell."

Farrell, his cheeks pink, withdrew into the background.

"Now, Talmage, I want a word with you. Ordinarily you cover a lot of ground. You're on your toes all the time. But lately you've fallen off. You don't cover short hits as you should, and it leaves too much for Lee to do at short. You must get a jump on. You're slowing up."

Talmage said nothing.

"Now, Cross," the captain went on, "you must cover that bag better. You can't be anchored to that bag when the ball is hit. You must take some of those that come along toward second base. You must put it up with me or I must put it up with you so that we don't both go after the same hit. If we don't do it in practice we'll never do it in a game.

"Finally, I want you out-fielders to throw that ball in to the plate once in a while. Don't be

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afraid that you'll hurt your arms. Throw the ball. Ordinarily we quit about this time, but not to-day. Let's start all over again for half an hour and see if we can't do better. Not the pitchers—they can go in. Now everybody work hard."

But they didn't work hard. They thought that they were at their best and merely had to breeze along to keep right. That thought had taken too deep a root to be summarily destroyed.

Danny walked off the field in disgust. This was what came, he thought, from telling a bunch of schoolboys that they were the best in the land. He thought that it would be a pleasure to have all the pneumonia germs in the world in one place so that he could go after them with a club, for it was pneumonia that had laid Craig low. And out there half an hour ago, while he had lectured the fellows, Marty Black had squinted at the clouds and had said not a word to back him up.

CHAPTER VIII

A NOTE FROM CRAIG

DANNY was not the sort of boy to fold his hands in his lap and give up to despair. He knew deep down in his heart that the nine was heading straight for a tumble. His big hope was that the tumble would come soon, and that the boys would pull themselves together in time to make a stand against Monroe.

That night he asked Dutton what the fellows thought of his speech on the field. The catcher shook his head.

"There's nothing to it, Danny," he admitted. "They're going to run headlong until they fall and break their necks. Keating has stuck in his oar and that hasn't helped, either."

"What has he done?" Danny bristled.

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"Sit down," said Dutton. "You can't fight him without the whole school finding out. He said that you were against this confidence, and that Marty was in favor of it. Is that true?"

Danny nodded.

"Then good night to your ball team," said the catcher.

Danny walked back and forth across the room. Good night to his ball team? Good night nothing! He'd find a way out.

"Baggs is talking, too," said Dutton.

At that Danny turned around suddenly. "Baggs?" he asked.

Dutton nodded. "You and he are all right, aren't you? I know the two of you had it out when you were a freshman, for I was your second in the fight. But I thought that was all over."

"It is all over," Danny nodded.

"Then why is Baggs saying that he thinks Marty has the right dope and that you're all wrong about confidence in the nine?"

"Maybe he thinks I'm wrong," Danny answered. "Baggs has played fair with me for two

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years. He thinks I'm wrong, that's all. Almost all the fellows think I'm wrong, don't they?"

"But they're not going around talking——"

"That's Baggs' way," said Danny. "Don't get the idea into your head that he's against me. He isn't. He just thinks I'm wrong and he speaks his mind."

"He'd be a whole lot more loyal if he kept his mouth shut," the catcher grunted.

Danny thought so, too. He had pleaded with the fellows for no knocking in the squad, and they had turned around and had used the hammers on Jerome. Now they were after him. Well, he'd sooner be the goat than have Jerry under fire. Before going to bed he vowed that he would have the nine playing snappy ball again if he had to bench some of the 'Varsity.

But, despite his determination, the practice did not improve. On the third day, as he was on his way to the locker room, the captain met Keating. The editor had watched the work from the stands.

"Didn't they look fine to-day?" Danny cried indignantly.

CAPTAIN DANNY

"I thought they looked all right," said Keating.

Danny stared at him. "How much do you really know about baseball, Keat?"

"Not much."

"Yet you went over my head and praised——"

"But Marty Black wanted me to do it," Keating said helplessly. "If a man who has played in the big leagues doesn't know the game, who does?"

Danny gave up the argument. After that he began to lose sleep.

To the captain's surprise, the nine won its second game from Mt. Merry. King was off his game, so much so that even Marty said that the burly pitcher would not do. So Steele was sent in. First they loaded him up with a raft of confidence by pointing out how Mt. Merry had fallen before Jerome at a time when Jerome had not been right. The result was that Steele pitched air-tight ball until the eighth inning. By that time the score was 10 to 0. In the ninth he let down and Mt. Merry got two runs. The ease with which this

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victory was scored made the squad feel that Marty Black was right. Confidence was the thing, and what happened in practice didn't count at all.

Danny came out of that game with a healthy, raging grouch. Of course he had wanted Manor Hall to win, but he would have been delighted had the nine played sloppy, ragged ball. Then he would have had some peg on which to hang an argument for brisker work in the practice. As it was, the nine had romped along with spirit and dash.

He was a wise enough little general to know that he had no chance now to talk to the players. All he could do was to wait for the crash to come.

Marty grinned at him. "Well, Cap, what do you think of confidence now?"

"What I thought of it before," the captain answered.

The coach looked surprised. "You mean you still think this bunch will hit a snag? Wake up! And let me tell you, Cap, if you start to worry them on the field it's going to do harm."

"I won't worry them," said Danny. "I'm

CAPTAIN DANNY

going to give them their head. When the crash comes I'll have a few words to say. Until then I'm through talking."

Yet it almost set the captain's fighting blood to boiling to watch the careless way the work ran on. Lincoln School had beaten the nine once with Steele pitching, and he had a feeling that Lincoln would turn the trick again. But when the teams clashed King pitched one of his few really good games. Lincoln was helpless, and the Green and White took ample revenge for that 7 to 2 defeat. Two Lincoln pitchers were hammered from the box and the third was kept in only because the game was hopelessly lost. King allowed but five hits.

The game had been played away from home. The squad, with what students had accompanied it, journeyed home in glory. Keating sat beside Danny on the train.

"The nine won again to-day," he said. He looked frankly at the captain. "Aren't you wrong about confidence being a bad thing for the fellows, Danny?"

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"No," said Danny shortly.

"But here they walk all over Lincoln and——"

"I know," the captain cried in disgust.

"They're defying all the laws. But they're only putting off the tumble. It's going to come. Why, after to-day's win we'll be lucky if those fellows go after anything that doesn't come right at their noses. There's one big thing I'm afraid of now."

"What's that?" Keating asked.

"That they'll start sliding when they face Monroe and never stop."

"I can't see it that way," the editor argued. "If their confidence keeps increasing, and if they win their games, they ought to go in against Monroe so cock-sure that they couldn't be beaten."

"And they couldn't be beaten either," Danny growled, "if they'd work in the practice. Confidence is all right if you mix it up with good honest, hard work. But when a team says 'We're good enough just as we are,' that team is due to have somebody bat it over the head."

"But——" Keating began.

"Oh, cut it out!" cried Danny. "I'll be mad

enough in a minute to bite you. You have your ideas and I have mine. The only difference is that if my ideas are wrong I'm the one that suffers. If yours are wrong it's simply a journalistic mistake. I tell you this nine is going to eat dirt mighty soon. You needn't publish that, but you can put it under your hat and remember I said it."

Keating got up and left the seat as though his feelings were hurt. Danny finished the rest of the ride alone. He didn't want company.

A triumphant body of students met the nine at the Manor Hall station. Danny slipped away and walked to the dormitory building by way of the side streets. But Marty remained with the players. Well, Danny thought bitterly, he had a right to stay for the cheering and the noise. It was his victory. It was his system that was pulling through.

That night the captain doubted the wisdom of his course. Was he wrong? Keating's words on the train came back to him. He had believed that the nine would wilt, but it went right on winning. Would it go on winning right along?

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How could it? he demanded of himself, and tossed his head impatiently. This habit of careless playing was bound to claim its just dues. He could see the proposition in no other way.

He had read somewhere that in the big leagues a manager will never break up a team that is winning even though stronger men sit upon the bench. It seemed to him that Marty Black was following the same line of reasoning. The nine had begun to loaf in practice. The loafing had not brought about defeat. And now the coach was willing to let the loafing go on because no bad result had thus far come.

The first of two games with Franklin came next. This game was to be played at Franklin, and Danny viewed it with alarm. Reports had come to him that the enemy had strength and speed, and her season's record bore this out. Marty said cheerily that Franklin would be good practice and would try out the nine for Monroe. But Danny, in the secrecy of his room, shook his head in disgust. Franklin, he thought, was quite likely to chew a big hole in the Green and White.

CAPTAIN DANNY

The captain had thought that Jerome would work this game. But Marty Black began to direct the work while Steele, King and Jerome warmed up each afternoon, and Jerome soon showed signs of distress. Not that he was as wild as he had been in the past. But some of his control had slipped.

"Better call Marty off," Dutton advised Danny. "I think he's worrying Jerome."

The captain went off to Jerry's room. "How's everything?" he asked genially.

Jerome shook his head. "There's a slip some place, Danny. Control isn't what it was."

"Anything worrying you?"

"If you mean Marty——"

"I don't," Danny cried hastily. "I meant maybe if there was something on your mind."

"There isn't," said Jerome. "And if you mean Marty," he added calmly, "that's not what's got me going. I've lost something. I'm not panicky about it. It will come back. I'm just off color for a day or so."

Danny grinned. "Got your nerve with you, haven't you?"

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"I have," said Jerome. "And there's only one thing can take it from me. I don't suppose I ought to say this to you, Danny, because you're the captain. But if Marty began to make remarks or began to catch me, I'd be gone in a minute. Why, I don't know. I guess it sounds cowardly, but that's how things are with me. If he watches me and keeps quiet, I'm all right. But as soon as he says do this or that, I can't do it. Then I lose my head."

"You only imagine that," said Danny.

"I don't," said Jerome. "I'm a queer eel, maybe, but I know what's good for me, and Marty isn't good for me. He knows so much about the game and he's seen so many good pitchers—Rusie, and Meekin and Dad Clarke in their day—that when he catches me I'm always thinking that he's having a quiet laugh at my expense. Foolish thought, isn't it?"

"Of course it is," said Danny. He tapped a creaky floor board with his foot. "I was thinking of using you against Franklin."

"I wish you wouldn't," said Jerome. "Of

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course, if you say yes I'll go in. Only I'd rather wait until I was right."

Danny left the room with a lighter heart. He could skip Jerry's turn without shaking that young man up. When Marty began to hint that King was pretty good Danny said:

"All right; we'll let King work."

The Franklin game was the first intimation that Danny's ideas were right. Before the second inning was over he saw that the nine was beginning to slip. The play was no longer smooth. There was uncertainty and slowness, and a tendency to hesitate whenever a player had the ball.

But Manor Hall won by a score of 8 to 7. Inning after inning King found himself in trouble, and inning after inning Franklin threw away her chances. Twice runners were caught asleep on the base paths, and another time, with three on and two out, the batter drove the ball into the legs of one of his own runners for the third out. It was horseshoe luck for the Green and White.

And Danny knew it. The stands cheered themselves hoarse while the victorious team trotted to

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the locker room. The students saw only the score. Danny saw that only sleepy work had kept Franklin from a win. He was not deceived. He knew that the nine had shown the first crack in its armor. What was worse, the first game of the big series with Monroe came next.

As he jogged to the locker room he wondered if there was not some way in which he might start his boys working again. He was confident that Marty Black was alive to the fact that luck had won to-day. Also was he confident that Marty would stick to the system that was pulling games from the fire. Marty would let the nine take things easy. Marty would not break up a winning system.

The captain stepped into the room. And at once he heard Marty's voice:

"Well, fellows, this is what I call plowing things up. We've played eleven games, and we've won ten. This Monroe series is as good as ours. There's nothing to it. We can't lose."

Danny, his cheeks red, passed down to his locker. Baggs winked at him.

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"Come on, Danny," he coaxed. "Admit you were wrong. See how we're winning."

The captain glared at the center-fielder. "You've played on the nine long enough to have better sense," he snapped.

A moment later he wished he could have recalled the words. It was bad policy to show that his temper was gone. And besides, so far Marty's plan had all the best of the argument. The nine had won. It was best for him to hold his peace. But when the slump came— He pounded his fist against the locker door. Then he'd talk turkey.

Three games were left on the schedule. Next came Monroe, then a return game with Franklin, and after that the second game with Monroe. Should the Monroe series be win and lose then a third game would be played.

The Franklin game had been played on a Saturday. Over Sunday Danny absolutely refused to talk baseball. Keating came to see him, but he chased the editor with wrath in his eyes.

"I want to tell you what Marty says," Keating pleaded from the hallway.

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But Danny closed the door. Keating pounded on the panels.

"Marty," he called through the keyhole, "says that we'll clean up Monroe with ease."

Danny did not go to the door. Well, what difference did it make whether Marty told that to the fellows or whether *The Greenie* printed it and told it to the whole school? On Tuesday the school paper carried the story. Danny read the headlines and tossed the copy into his waste paper basket.

A new let-down had come to the practice. It was more serious than the let-down of the preceding ten days, for this was a let-down that comes to a nine that has won through luck but does not know it; to a nine that thinks conceitedly that its own cleverness is responsible for its victories. There was no mistaking the atmosphere. Talmage, the third-baseman, actually asked to get off for a day or two. Danny swallowed hard and said no, and Talmage walked off as though huffed. And then, too, the players did not respond quickly when called. They dallied and lingered. The

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life and snap of the nine was going. Had it been going from overwork the captain would not have minded so much. Overwork would have meant that they had tried not wisely but too hard. It was the feeling that an easy task lay ahead that had routed this nine.

Danny had vowed that he would hold his peace, but now he could not keep still. Instead of addressing the players as a whole, he talked to them individually. This went on for two days. Then, as he was passing through the locker room he heard one of the substitutes say:

"I suppose Danny thinks he's got to talk like that. It's just part of a captain's job."

Danny swung around as though he would go back toward the speaker. After a moment he brought himself under control. He walked on to his locker.

But though he had himself under control, his temper was burning. He tramped across the Yard with his teeth set. Pilgrim, the student member of the athletic committee, said he wanted a few minutes. Danny announced grimly that he

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wouldn't talk baseball with any fellow in the place. He went up to his room and left Pilgrim staring after him in amazement.

There was a letter on his study table. He recognized the handwriting as Craig's, and instantly the envelope was ripped and the short note was in his hands. He stared at the few words:

Don't take anything for granted. Dig in.
Monroe is working like the mischief.

"Dig in!" Danny groaned. "How in blazes can I dig in with a gang that's asking for days off?"

CHAPTER IX

THE SLAUGHTER

DANNY guessed what Craig's note meant. The man, off in the South some place, knew of their string of victories. From his long years of experience with boys he knew, too, that there would come a bold spirit of cockiness. He had seen many a bark wrecked on such a rock. So, though he had refused to let Danny write to him, he sent his warning to the boy, and the fact that he had written at all showed how gravely he appreciated the danger.

It would never do, Danny thought, to have anyone know that the old coach had written to him. Not that Craig meant to interfere—the captain knew better than that. But if the note were seen there would be talk. The boy tore the envelope

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and note into small pieces. Piling the pieces in a little mound he set them afire with a match. He walked over to one of the windows and stood there with his hands in his pockets.

Dig in! Well, for the last time he'd try. The question, however, was how could he get his nine going as it had been working three weeks before. Plan after plan came to him, but each was in turn cast aside as hopeless. He must make the fellows see the danger—but how? If he got them together and made a speech and told them frankly what he thought, the squad would know that there was a complete lack of sympathy between captain and coach. Just at present the players attributed his anxiety to a burning, over anxious desire to win. It was better to have them think along such a line than to whisper darkly that their leaders were clashing. Anyway, should he make a speech he knew that the fellows would go away from the meeting laughing and saying that it was the same old story.

Should he work them overtime—pound them until they had to work for him? His better judg-

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ment told him that this would be a mistake. The probable result would be to make the boys ugly and grouchy, and in no condition at all for an important game.

Danny began to feel like a squirrel running around and around in his wheel with no outlet and no result. He turned away from the window and brushed up the charred embers of Craig's letter. Dutton came in.

"Well," he said grimly, "if this nine pulls through the next game without taking a thundering good licking, you can put me down as having a few cracks in my brain."

Danny walked back to the window. "I've done my best," he said.

He was still standing there when a knock came on the door. Dutton called, "Come in," and a moment later, "Hello, Farrell! What brings you here?"

"I want to see Danny," said the right-fielder. "That is, if—if——"

Danny turned from the window. "If what?"

"If I'm not butting in," said Farrell.

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"Of course you're not butting in," said Danny. He had a warm spot in his heart for Farrell, for Farrell was one of the few boys who practiced as he wanted them to. "I'm always glad to see any of the fellows."

"Oh, I don't mean it that way. I mean whether you'd want to hear what I have to say."

"About what?"

"About the nine."

Danny caught his breath. "I'm mighty glad to hear what any man on the nine has to say," he said. He watched Farrell narrowly.

But despite this invitation to talk the right-fielder shifted from foot to foot awkwardly.

"Well," he said at last, "I've been thinking this over for a long time. I saw you worrying, and it's been on the tip of my tongue a dozen times to ask if I might have a talk with you. To-day I made up my mind that I'd make a break right after the practice, and here I am."

"What do you mean?" Danny asked.

"I mean what you're thinking, and what's happening to the nine. I'm older than the other

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boys here—most of them anyway. I think this is a good school and a good nine, and we ought to clean up.”

“We’re going to,” Dutton said cheerfully.

“Danny don’t think so,” said Farrell.

“Now what do you mean?” the captain demanded.

Farrell now had his courage. “Why, you know you think we’re going to lose this first Monroe game. You needn’t answer,” he added quickly. “I don’t want to put you in the hole. But there’s one thing certain. I know just what you know.”

Danny glanced helplessly at Dutton. Ordinarily he was used to any emergency; but to have a player come in and calmly tell him he was expecting defeat was a little too much for him. What was worse, he knew that here was a boy speaking in all friendliness.

“You’re talking wild,” he said vaguely. “You’re all twisted, Farrell.”

“I’m not,” said the visitor. “I’ve seen such a bunch as this before. Last summer we had a nine in our town. I didn’t play, but I was a scorer

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and they took me around. They won a string of eight or nine, and then they got swelled heads. You couldn't make them work. They'd just see how pretty they could toss the ball around."

"What happened to them?" Dutton asked eagerly.

"They got their medicine good and plenty. This crowd is going to get it the same way."

"They're not," said Danny.

"They are," said Farrell. "And you can't help it. Nothing you can do will help it. There's only one way this nine can be saved for the Monroe series."

"How's that?" Danny demanded.

"Let them get a good hammering in the first game. That may make them come back and work as they did a few weeks ago. I'd like to help you make them work before this first game, but you can't do it."

"Why not?" Danny asked.

"Oh, just because you can't. You know what I mean. I've heard this gang talk. They say you're so anxious to win that you're afraid of your own

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self, and they say that you're loony about this kid Jerome, and that he is only good for about one good game a season and he's already pitched that. Marty Black knows about the talk, and he hasn't tried to stop it."

"Come now," Danny cried sharply. "None of that, Farrell."

"I know what I know," the boy insisted stubbornly. "I don't mean that Marty would go around saying you're crazy about Jerome. The trouble is he thinks Jerry is no good, and when he hears the fellows talking that way I suppose he doesn't want to interfere because he thinks they're right. But that sort of talk isn't doing you any good, and you can just go and bet your glass eye on that."

"You haven't the right dope on Marty," Danny said loyally.

"All right!" Farrell answered. "Now about that nine in my town. It had a captain and it had a manager. The manager got a big head with the players. He wanted to let them drift. The captain was all for work, and the fellows

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laughed at him. Well, he kept his mouth shut and let the manager have his own way. Then, when the blow-up came, the manager was overboard and the captain came back in the saddle. See what I mean?"

"Just what do you mean?" Dutton asked quietly.

"I mean this: It's up to either Danny or Marty Black to be shown up before the nine."

"Here!" Danny cried. "I won't have——"

"Just a minute," Farrell said. "This Monroe game is going to turn things lose. The nine is going to be licked. If it's Marty Black's nine and he places them, he will be the one who is to be thrown down. If it's your nine and you place them, you will be thrown down. Take your choice."

Danny argued that he and Marty were not at loggerheads and that nobody was going to be thrown down. Farrell stared up at the ceiling and said nothing.

"Look here," said Danny, "just suppose there was something to all this talk of yours. Not that there is, of course, but just let us suppose that there was. If I knew the nine was going to lose

it wouldn't be right for me to take advantage of Marty any more than it would be right for Marty to take advantage of me."

His words had no effect on Farrell. The right-fielder admitted quite cheerfully that he didn't care a copper for the ethics of the situation.

"I'm interested only in the result," he said. "You take my tip and you'll have this nine with you heart and soul."

"I can't unload the responsibility on anybody else," Danny said with a shake of his head. "They don't teach us that spirit at Manor Hall."

Farrell was not abashed. "I'm not in favor of throwing the harpoon into a fellow," he admitted, "but regardless of what Manor Hall teaches there is a time when it's a case of save himself who can. This is a case of save the nine. Well, I've got it off my mind and I'm not going to bother about it any more. I'll play the best I know how."

"I know you will," said Danny. He followed Farrell to the door and patted his back. A moment later he came back to Dutton.

"What do you think of that?" he asked.

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"It's good practical common sense," Dutton answered, "and yet—" He shrugged his shoulders. "I don't like the sound of it, Danny. Anyway, there goes the supper bell. Let's forget it. Farrell has some queer ideas, but one thing is sure. He's your friend."

"I know that," said the captain.

All during the meal Danny kept turning the right-fielder's proposition in his mind. As the boys crowded from the dining hall his mind was made up. He'd fight fair. He wouldn't try to shirk responsibility.

Meanwhile, Jerome had regained his confidence. He felt that he had something on the ball. The captain had practically decided to use him in the first game against Monroe. Dutton had been handling the boy of late, and Dutton had reported that his control was never better.

But two thorns kept jabbing the captain and kept him from a final decision. One was that Marty Black still persisted in declaring that Jerome was not what a pitcher should be, and the other was the attitude of the fellows. Danny

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had thought that Jerry's game against Meade had brought the squad behind him with a jump. Perhaps this had been the effect for a while, but this advantage was now lost. The players said that Jerry was only dependable for one good game a season, and that that one good game had already been pitched. That meant that they would not support him with heart-warming confidence.

So, when Marty and Danny got together to discuss a pitcher, the captain's head was spinning with a confusion of thoughts. Marty did not suggest King. In fact, he suggested nobody. He leaned back in his chair and stared at Danny.

"Well, Cap?" he asked.

"We'll scratch out King to start with," said Danny. "He's just worked two games in a row, and his last performance against Franklin wasn't any too showy."

"That leaves Steele," said Marty, "and—and Jerome."

Danny nodded. "I like Jerome," he said after a moment of silence.

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Marty got out of the chair and made a show of raising a window a bit higher.

"Cap," he said seriously, "ever since the athletic committee told me you were boss—no offense, but that's a crazy custom—since they told me you were boss I've given you your own way. But here's where I put in my oar again. I don't like this bird Jerome, and I guess you know it."

"I do," said Danny dryly.

"As soon as I see a left-hander with a bad record I want to get away from him. Here's an important game coming. We have a nine chock full of confidence. That confidence will pull them through. But if you tie them to a pitcher they doubt, they'll go higher than a kite. I want this team to win, Cap. I'm just as anxious to see it win as you are."

The man's sincerity touched the boy. Marty's heart was in the right place; it was his way of looking at things that had brought about the clashes.

"I know you want a winner," Danny answered. "I've never doubted that for a minute."

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"All right," said Marty. "Now for this bird Jerome; if I thought he could get away with that game I'd honestly say use him. But the nine has no use for him, and I think the nine is right."

"The nine is wrong," said Danny. He added hastily: "But I haven't picked Jerome yet."

"That's good," cried the coach. "A captain should have an open mind. As for King— Maybe you're right about those two games in succession. I'd like to see him start against Monroe, but maybe you're right. We'll scratch him. That leaves Steele. How about him, Cap?"

Danny shook his head helplessly. "What about Steele?" he asked.

"I prefer him to Jerome," Marty stated bluntly. "You know and I know that he's at his best when he figures the game is a cinch. Well, here's a game this crowd doesn't see how it can lose. This game, with the dope running that way, was just made for Steele. I'd say take a chance and use him."

But Danny did not wish to commit himself. He

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said, presently, that he'd like to have a day to think it over.

"Go ahead," Marty said heartily. "And remember, I've got my heart set on this Monroe series, too."

There was no doubt about that, Danny thought as he walked back to the dormitory building. The pity of it was, though, that the coach should do so many things that served to upset the boys who formed the squad. He was like a man who, with the best of intentions, commits folly after folly. Were he dealing with men, Danny was sure that he would be successful to a marked degree. But among boys he seemed to slip up.

Danny had an idea what Farrell would advise if that practical young person were asked for an opinion. He would say to pitch Steele and let everything be up to Marty. But Danny was not built along such lines. He would make an honest fight for that game, and if there was a chance of the fellows playing in back of Jerome he would pitch him whether it meant win or lose.

That afternoon, while the pitchers warmed up,

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Marty came over and called for a glove. At once Jerome became flustered. He didn't pitch as wildly as in the past, but nevertheless he showed up poorly alongside the less nervous Steele and King. Danny wished that the coach would go away and let the hurlers alone. Soon Marty did quit the job. He walked off with Danny.

"There you are, Cap," he remarked. "Wild as a gale of wind. I went there just to size him up. You see for yourself what's that. Now, this boy King——"

"He didn't show very much," Danny retorted.

"He didn't," Marty admitted quite cheerfully. "But a lucky pitcher is better than the best man in the world who loses his game. Of course we agreed to scratch King and that's the end of it. But this Jerome— Are you still considering him, Cap?"

Danny nodded.

Marty laid a hand on the boy's arm. "You play this game safe," he advised. "Steele is your man."

Danny made no reply to this.

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Only two days remained before the Monroe game. That afternoon the captain did everything possible to get work out of his players. He labored earnestly to set them an example, but soon he realized how hopeless were his efforts. Yet behind it all he felt the need of keeping up the fight. He must not shirk any part of the responsibility.

No sooner had he wakened to the fact that the fielding practice was hopeless than he turned his attention to batting. He had an idea that the first Monroe game might yet be saved if his players did heavy execution with their bats.

The boys, however, when they came to the plate, performed their labors carelessly. They swung at anything. Danny wearily cautioned them.

After the cautioning they stood like so many sticks waiting for the ball to cut the exact heart of the plate. Finally Danny's impatience got the better of him.

"Why didn't you swing at that?" he cried to Steele. "You ought to have knocked that into the next town."

"It wasn't over," Steele answered sullenly.

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"It was over the outside corner," Danny cried, "and the easiest kind of an out-curve."

"You called me for striking at the last out-curve."

"It wasn't the same kind of ball," Danny cried fiercely. "That other was a fast one and at least six inches outside."

He saw that Steele was tired of the argument, and he realized suddenly that it was no use. Arguing was useless. He was making matters worse. The boys were simply playing against him feeling all the time that they were quite able to romp away with this game against Monroe.

Danny came in to the bench. From there he watched the sorry mess that was called practice. From snatches of conversation that he heard, he knew that most of the fellows thought that Jerome in the box would mean trouble.

He kicked a bat aside and stepped forth again. At that moment Baggs passed Marty.

"Jerome going to pitch?" the center-fielder asked.

Marty shook his shoulders suggestively.

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Then at last did Danny realize that he couldn't pitch the boy. He must let Marty have his way. But as he sadly undressed in the gym that night he had the consolation of knowing that he had left no stone unturned in an effort to shoulder his share of the responsibility. Even then he felt that he would have pitched Jerome if he could have counted on any support for him.

After supper the captain went to the coach's lodgings.

"It's Steele," he said.

"Good!" cried Marty. "You can go to bed and forget the game."

Danny shook his head.

"Look here, Cap," Marty said good humoredly, "do you think Monroe has a chance the way this bunch is traveling?"

"I think we're going to get licked," Danny answered. "Why don't you help me, Marty? Get them out to-morrow and make them work. It's the last chance."

"And have them lose their confidence?" the coach asked in amazement.

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"They're overconfident," said the captain. "That's what's going to beat them."

Marty smiled. "Tell me that after the game," he invited. "Give me a confident team every time. I remember back when the old National League had twelve clubs instead of eight——"

"This isn't the League," said Danny. "This is a schoolboy nine and we're handled as though we were professionals"

The criticism did not disturb Marty in the least. "Baseball is baseball," he said, "no matter who plays it. What's the matter, Cap? Going? Well, forget about this game. It's won."

Danny didn't sleep well that night. Next morning the men and women who would witness the game began to arrive. The school town took on holiday dress. Everybody seemed to be merry.

There was practice that afternoon—a light, airy bubble of practice that lasted but a few minutes. Steele was told that he was to pitch. At this news the squad seemed to brighten and to look with a smile at Marty. The coach smiled back. And

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on the way back to the locker room he fell into step with Farrell.

"To-morrow's where we get square for old scores," Marty said genially.

Farrell didn't answer. But Baggs, who was in the rear, said with a chuckle:

"Yes, I guess we'll teach them a lesson."

By this time Danny had resigned himself to what he thought was inevitable. He knew that next day Steele would do his best, that Dutton could be depended upon, that Farrell would do his duty. He himself would play the game the best he knew how. But he expected the rest of the nine to fall apart—Cross, Talmage and the others.

From his window he watched the frolic of students and graduates in the Yard. To-morrow, he thought, they would be singing a different tune. Dutton, who was watching beside him, gave a short laugh.

"Come on, Danny," he invited. "Let's go to bed."

Fifteen minutes later the captain was asleep. It was a sleep of nervous exhaustion.

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Early next morning the Monroe nine arrived. By this time Manor Hall had so many visitors that they simply overflowed the streets. Danny was surprised to find that he enjoyed his breakfast. He even got a share of enjoyment from his dinner. Then he journeyed with the squad to the locker room. They donned their uniforms.

Up to this point the captain had been enjoying a reaction from worry. His nerves had rebelled and had demanded a rest. But the sound of Monroe's cheers stiffened the boy's spine. After all, the nine that won the first game had half the battle, and he did not want to surrender one-half without a struggle. He asked Steele about his arm.

"Great!" the pitcher grinned. "Watch me mow them down."

Danny went out feeling that perhaps a miracle might happen—perhaps Steele might make good.

But the first Monroe batter greeted Steele with a three-bagger, and the next boy hit to right field for two bases. The first run of the game was in. Danny felt that Manor Hall's hopes had already crumbled.

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Steele, too, had lost his varnish of confidence. He was plainly worried. The next batter sacrificed. The runner went to third. The Green and White stands gave a cheer of encouragement.

The cheers did not help Steele. The fourth batter slashed him for a single. Right then and there the nine went to pieces.

Steele walked the next two boys. The bases were full with one out.

Marty, on the bench, signalled to Danny. Change pitchers? Danny signalled back yes. Again Marty made certain signs, and the signs were a question. Jerome or King? Danny selected King. The way things stood now it would be suicide to pitch Jerome.

So King came out. He struck out the next boy, and the Green and White cheer sounded with some body to it. Then a boy dumped the ball to Cross, and Cross let it go through his legs. Two more runs came in.

"I told them," Danny muttered grimly.

After that came a foul that Dutton missed, and then a screeching liner to right field. But Farrell,

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starting to run as the ball was hit, made a circus catch. The inning was over, and Monroe had scored four runs.

The nine, as it came in, was about shot to pieces. The fellows dropped down on the bench.

"King will hold them now," Marty said to Danny.

"Sure," said Danny. But he didn't believe it. He caught Farrell's eye, and Farrell winked.

A long, thin boy named Maxim was pitching for Monroe. Cross came to bat upset because of his error, and he struck out on three pitched balls. Chapman tapped the ball in front of the plate and never had a chance. Danny, cold with rage, hit to deep short and managed to beat out the hit. Baggs, the surest hitter on the nine, came to the plate.

"Kill it," the stands begged. "Kill it."

The center-fielder tried hard. He shot the ball on a line to left field. The coacher on first lost his head and waved him on. Baggs started for second—and before he had gone halfway the ball was there waiting for him. It was crazy, foolish baseball.

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The Green and White stands sat stunned. Was this the nine that report said couldn't lose?

On the bench Marty Black bit the end of his fountain pen and kept his eyes on his score-book.

Despite two infield errors, both by Talmage, King managed to squeeze through the second inning in safety. Marty picked up a world of courage.

"Monroe's through," he told the nine. "Get a few runs, now."

But Manor Hall's batters kept hitting at bad balls, and not a boy got on base. The third inning started—and trouble once more broke for the Green and White.

The first boy got his base on balls. He took a daring lead. King snapped the ball to first, and Cross let the sphere go through him. The runner went to third. The Monroe stands laughed uproariously. Oh, but this was funny!

Two runs came in that inning, and the score was 6 to 0.

On the bench, between the halves of the inning, Marty poured a torrent of sarcasm at Cross. Cross glared sullenly at the ground. Danny said

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nothing. And after Monroe had scored another run in the fifth inning, Marty also fell into silence. The players, as they came to the bench, did not look at Danny. The score was 7 to 0.

Monroe had three runners on the bases in the sixth inning, but did not score. And then came the lucky seventh. The stands stood up and stretched.

King got rid of the first two batters. The third boy hit him for a double. Then, in rapid succession, came three singles.

The Green and White team was floundering. The enemy shrewdly began to bunt. Talmage—Talmage who had wanted days off—raced in, scooped the ball with one hand, and threw it ten feet over Cross's head. Four runs were in and a runner was on third.

Danny signalled to the bench. Jerome threw off his sweater and came forth.

He got a feeble cheer from the stands. He took his place on the mound. Dutton signalled for that in-shoot above the knees. Jerome nodded. Then Dutton's fingers telegraphed a notice that the runner was far off third.

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Jerome swung around and threw. Talmage caught the ball and froze to it. The runner was out as he slid back to the bag. And the score board showed that Monroe led by a score of 11 to 0.

As the players spread along the bench Baggs sat down beside Danny.

"I'm sorry, Danny," he whispered, "but it's too late to wake up now, isn't it?"

"Too late for to-day," said Danny.

He was right. His nine got two runs in the last inning because Maxim eased up, but these runs were practically a gift.

Nevertheless, there was one bright ray through the eighth and ninth innings, and that was the hurling of Jerome. Unimpressed by the score, the pitcher worked calmly and methodically. His control was excellent, and he had the enemy hitting weakly at curve balls. In the eighth inning he retired the side in order, and in the ninth inning he pitched to but four batters. As the last man was retired a man stood up in the stands.

"Why didn't they send you in first?" he roared. "What's the matter with Jerome!"

CAPTAIN DANNY

Jerome went in to the bench as though he had not heard. But the players had heard, and the substitutes had heard, and Marty had heard, too.

A beaten nine, they went quietly back to the locker room. Danny, with set lips, took his shower and his rub. There wasn't a word spoken. He adjusted his four-in-hand tie, combed his hair, and reached for his hat.

As he opened the gym door he looked back. Every eye in the room dropped. Danny closed the door and went down stairs and off to the dormitory building.

Half an hour later Dutton came in. He tossed his hat on top of the bureau.

"I don't often make predictions," said the catcher, "but here's where I start. Marty Black is due to spend a few thoughtful hours this evening."

Danny looked up. "How do you know?"

"Because after you left he didn't have a word to say. And any time Mr. Black keeps quiet after a game you can just bet that something has rapped him across the ribs."

CHAPTER X

BROKEN HARNESS

DANNY went down to supper that night with the resolve that no fellow would get him to talk about the game. He had an idea that students would come to him with sympathetic words. Instead, he was astonished to find that everybody was scowling at him and at his players.

For the school suddenly felt that it had been deceived by *The Greenie*, by Marty Black, and by each and every individual member of the nine. A chorus of criticism had already started that seemed likely to annihilate every fellow connected with baseball. There was not a kind word for a single member of the squad, not even for Jerome. Students said bitterly that he would have been

CAPTAIN DANNY

hammered, too, only Monroe had gotten tired running the bases.

At first Danny resented this attitude of the school. But soon he came to be thankful that things were so. He wanted the squad pounded so badly that it would hide in the dormitory building and keep away from the Yard. He wanted the nine to feel the iron of disgrace.

Over Sunday he let the lesson sink in. He did not go near Marty, nor did Marty come near him. Monday morning he was out of bed with a bound. To-day they started back, he thought. But halfway through his toilet he stopped with a frown. Suppose the nine was so completely demoralized that its courage was gone. What then?

Something, though, told him that his boys had slipped but had not collapsed. For on Sunday they had sheepishly presented themselves at prayers. At that time they had not looked altogether discouraged. Rather had they the appearance of boys who had taken bitter medicine and had found it good for what ailed them.

Monday afternoon the captain came a bit late

BROKEN HARNESS

to the locker room. The place was empty. Out on the field the players were working. Danny walked to a window and watched.

Marty Black was directing. There was nothing sloppy about the work to-day. The ball was kept flying. Every man was on his toes. There was a tense, keen grimness to every move. Danny turned away from the window with a nod of his head. He thought he had the fellows where he wanted them.

He came out to the field and walked slowly toward the bench. Baggs nodded and then turned away his head. Talmage said a faint "Hello, Danny."

Danny smiled. "Don't look so down in the mouth, Tal," he joked. He went on to the plate and met Marty. "Call the fellows," he said.

Soon the players came in. They didn't take their time to-day. They moved briskly. They were full of life. Watching them Danny got the idea that they would willingly and penitently have groveled in the dirt had the order been given to them.

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"You fellows," the captain said gravely, "know what happened Saturday. You all realize how it seems to be chasing balls all over the lot. You know what it means to have your school look upon you as a joke. Now, perhaps you think that Monroe is going to do that same trick again."

"We don't," said Cross.

"She isn't," said Danny. "If this nine will work the way it did the early part of the season Monroe will have a different story to tell next Saturday. The whole trouble with us was that we were led astray. We thought we couldn't be beaten——"

"You didn't think so," Farrell broke in calmly. "You knew just what was going to happen."

Danny tried hard to take no notice of the interruption. What was the use, he thought, of taking a slap at Marty?

"We thought," he went on gravely, "that Monroe would drop dead as soon as we came out on the diamond. If we hadn't felt that way the game would have been close. Maybe we would not have won, but we would have given them a fight. Anyway, the thing that beat us was not baseball. It

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was overconfidence. As soon as Monroe began to score we lost our nerve and everything was over."

"Correct," said Farrell.

"This nine," Danny continued, "proved three weeks ago that it could play good ball. We're going to prove that again. I think that every fellow here will work hard to win back our reputation. Hard work alone will do it."

"We'll do the work," said Baggs.

"Now, what I want to see every fellow do every day is to make each play as though the Monroe series depended on that play. At the bat I want you to think that every practice hit is the hit that means victory or defeat. Use your brains. If the pitcher is wild, make him pitch. If he puts over an easy one that you know you can hit, don't juggle your bat and wait to see whether it cuts the plate or not—lace it out. I want to see free hitting. Just the same I want to see every fellow take advantage of a pitcher who is going wild. And as to the fielding, I want your heart in it all the time. I want you to try for everything. No

CAPTAIN DANNY

chap ever made a success who was afraid to take a chance because he might make an error. Get into the game and play your best."

He turned way to the bench. The nine scattered. Marty followed him.

"That all you are going to say to them, Cap?"

"Yes."

"No roast for the way they played Saturday?"

"It wasn't ball playing that lost the game," said Danny. "It was the stuff that was put into their heads."

Marty walked away.

Never did a captain have a more willing crowd of workers than Danny had that day. The outfielders were away with the crack of the bat, and when they got the ball they held it scarcely an instant. Every infielder was on his toes. The practice was touch and go every minute. At the end of the day, on the way to the locker room, Farrell passed Danny and grinned and winked.

"They're coming back," he said. He lowered his voice: "So it was Marty's nine that was thrown down."

BROKEN HARNESS

"You're mistaken," Danny said sharply. "I didn't plot——"

"I know," Farrell said earnestly. "I didn't go to you thinking you'd follow my suggestion, but it was on my mind and I had to speak. Just the same, it was Marty's nine, and Marty is the one who knows best that the roof fell in."

That day's practice was not a spasmodic upheaval. The next day the squad still had its chastened mood, and it did its work carefully and well.

Danny had an idea that his pitchers might be nervous facing Monroe in the next game, so he started a steady, plugging drive of batting practice. King, facing the 'Varsity, wasn't any too sure, and Danny knew that he had not yet recovered from the hammering his curves had received. Steele was hopeless. The way Monroe had greeted him had sapped his courage. Jerome was the only one of the three to hold his own against the line of boys that walked steadily to the plate.

So Danny began to nurse Jerome. He pitched him just enough to keep his hand in. And soon

it began to be whispered that Jerome would work in the second game.

By this time, though, the squad was ready to believe that the captain knew pretty well what was what. Of course, few of the players had any real confidence in Jerry. They said among themselves that he hadn't worked long enough in the first Monroe game to have given a real account of himself. But if Danny said he was the boy—Well, Danny had been right about the practice, and he might be right about this.

The captain had one long talk with the pitcher.

"Think you could hold Monroe?" he asked.

Jerome nodded. "I don't think they'd hit me hard. They didn't hit me in those two innings last Saturday. It's only a question of whether I could stick through nine innings and keep putting that ball over. You see, I can talk to you about my control and not fly off the handle. But if anybody else started to say control to me I'd get rattled. That's funny, isn't it?"

Danny did not ask who was meant by "anybody else."

BROKEN HARNESS

"It's your nerves," he explained. "Now, Jerry, just between you and me, can you pull through that game?"

"I can go in and pitch my best and give them a fight every inning."

"Don't you feel any more confident than that?"

Jerome shook his head. "I do and I don't. One minute I feel that if I went in there and worked just as I do in the practice there'd be nothing to it. Then I begin to feel as though everything would go wrong—that I'd lose control and that they'd hit me. Yet I don't dread the game. If I was told to pitch, I'd pitch. Anyway, I've had an idea that I'll go in."

"Why?" Danny asked.

"I've been watching Steele and King. They both had the heart thumped out of them. I figured that you and Marty wouldn't want to start either of them after what had happened, so you'd take a long chance on me."

"It won't be a long chance—if we pitch you," Danny said stoutly.

Yet, as he went down to his room, he wished

CAPTAIN DANNY

that there was some chance to use Steele or King. He had been disappointed to find Jerome shy on confidence. He had reasoned that the boy would be feeling an ardent itch to get at the enemy. Instead, Jerome acted as though he would not be chagrined if another pitcher was selected.

What soured the captain's mind for a time was his positive conviction that Jerome could stop Monroe dead if he would only grit his teeth to the task. It was a pity that Jerome was such an in-and-outer. And yet he would have to be used. His logic was right. King and Steele had had the heart pounded out of them.

Danny saw but one ray of hope. Jerome had promised to fight through every inning.

There wasn't much discussion as to who should pitch. Marty talked it over with Danny Thursday afternoon.

"I suppose," he said, "you feel that Jerome ought to get a crack at them after last Saturday's blowup?"

"He ought to," said Danny. "King was pounded hard."

BROKEN HARNESS

"It was King's off day," the coach replied. "Every pitcher is bad at times. Well, I guess Jerome is the best we can do. How is he—nervous?"

"He is and he isn't," said Danny. "Better not talk to him about the game. Just let him alone."

"That's the dope," said Marty. "If anybody as much as looks at that bird he starts to throw them through the roof. Well, I hope he stays on the ground."

There was no doubt but that the nine was playing vastly better ball. The school, however, was pessimistic about the outcome of the game. For one thing, the contest was to be played at Monroe. Then, since last Saturday, the nine had been practicing behind closed gates and nobody knew what was going on. Keating tried to get in one afternoon, but Danny stopped him.

"Look here," said the editor, "I want to print something about the nine."

"You've printed enough for one season," said the captain.

"But Marty Black said it was all right," Keat-

ing wailed. "I wouldn't turn lose a story to hurt the nine for the world. And I must print something."

"All right," Danny answered. "Pound the nine for the way it played last Saturday."

"I don't want to pound."

"Then praise—and you'll have every fellow in school cutting your throat. It's no use, Keating. I can't risk any more trouble. You don't get in."

Keating turned away. "Well," he said, "I'll print an appeal to stand by the team and go to Monroe for the game."

"I don't care if not a single fellow goes," Danny stated emphatically. "This bunch is in disgrace, and I want it to stay in disgrace until it does something to justify school confidence. And look here, Keat, if we win Saturday——"

"Yes?"

"Don't you print a line about how we'll win the deciding game or I'll be in for a talk with you."

"I won't print half a line," Keating promised. Friday the nine practiced with a grim zeal.

BROKEN HARNESS

After the work, as Danny and Marty left the locker room, the fellows began to gather at the far end.

"What's hatching there?" Marty asked suspiciously.

Danny did not know. But an hour later Cross knocked at his door in the dormitory building.

"The fellows want me to say," the first-base-man began, "that no matter how to-morrow's game ends they will have done their best."

"I know it," Danny smiled. "You tell them that I haven't a bit of fault to find."

Next morning the squad left for Monroe. There were cheers in the Yard, cheers on the way to the station—but very few students accompanied the team. Marty grumbled that everything would be breaking for Monroe. Danny said nothing. He had a nine to-day, he thought, that would fight to the last pitched ball, cheers or no cheers. To that extent he was satisfied.

Jerome kept pretty much to himself. Danny, as the train approached Monroe, dropped into the seat alongside him.

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"How do you feel?" he asked.

"I wish the game was over," said Jerome. "The way I look at it, this whole thing is up to me. If I break to-day, we lose our last chance."

"Nervous?" Danny asked.

"I don't know what I am. I know that my mind is made up to pitch if I have to bite the ball in half. Outside of that I know nothing."

Here, the captain thought, was a sort of desperate courage. He knew by the signs that to-day Jerome would pitch on his nerve. The cry of the brakemen—"Monroe! Monroe!"—ran through the cars. Danny, with the others, crowded from the train. When he looked around the platform Dutton had Jerome by the arm and was leading him off.

The game that afternoon was a bitter struggle. It was a game that Manor Hall should have lost—but she won. Grimly she stuck to her guns all the afternoon, and it was her grimness and her courage that at last brought her victory. She had not yet thoroughly recovered from her first rout. But she could fight, and fight she did. Again and

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again she was turned back with two or three boys on the bases. Always she returned to the attack. And at last, under this bombardment of dangerous moments, Monroe cracked. Three infield errors in the eighth filled the bases, and then Baggs unlimbered a burly drive to the center-field fence. The final score was 7 to 5.

And Jerome had had a full share in the victory. He pitched a game that was enough to turn a coach's hair white. Time after time he slipped and passed men, and time after time he stood on the mound and pulled himself together and crawled out of danger. He wilted, but he never gave up. Danny and Cross and Dutton realized the battle he was fighting, and there was a warm personal note in the encouragement they called to him. After Baggs' hit in the eighth, when the nine came out to take the field, Dutton walked with one arm on Jerry's shoulder.

"You must hold them," he said.

"After that hit?" Jerome asked. "Of course I must. And I will."

He did. Not a Monroe boy reached first base

CAPTAIN DANNY

during the eighth or ninth. When the last man was out, instead of racing for the dressing-room, he came in to the bench for his sweater. He sat there with it, and Danny came in to him.

"What's the matter, Jerry?" he asked.

"I'm tired," said the boy. "Let me sit here a while." He sighed. "I'm glad that game's over."

Danny patted his knee. "You're the gamest pitcher in the string," he said. "I know, Jerry."

Jerome smiled wanly. "Thanks, Danny. My heart was in my throat every inning."

After a while they walked to the dressing-room. What a place it was! None of the gloom now that had characterized last Saturday. Instead there was song and joke, and a big yell for Jerome when he came through the door. Over in a corner Marty was announcing that he knew this nine was going to come through.

The merriment died after a while. They went back to Manor Hall. News of the victory had been telephoned to the school. It seemed that every fellow was down at the station to meet the train. The pessimism had passed.

BROKEN HARNESS

But the squad very sensibly refused to be lionized. So the celebration fell flat after a few minutes. It is hard to make lions of those who refuse to roar.

Two games were left on the schedule. Next Wednesday came a game with Franklin, and after that the last battle with Monroe.

Danny had an idea that the win over Monroe would gradually bring Jerome to a point where he would be unbeatable. He did not express this thought even to Dutton. Sunday he went up to Jerome's room and found the pitcher stretched out and calmly reading a book.

"How's the big gun?" the captain asked.

Jerome smiled. "Fine! Say, but my nerves did surely raise ructions with me for a while."

"How are you now?"

"Oh, I'm all right now. That game showed me that I can pull out even if I do wobble a bit. It's all a question of how stiff you hold your spine."

"Of course it is," said Danny.

This time victory did not go to the heads of the nine. When the squad assembled for practice

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Monday there was no tendency to loaf. The players had an idea that Maxim would work against them next Saturday, and they were resolved that this time he would not shut them out for eight innings. Batting practice ran vigorously all afternoon. Jerome, however, was not worked. He took a light warmup, and then disappeared toward the locker room.

Marty came to Danny. "What's the matter with Jerome? Did you tell him to go in?"

Danny nodded. "I'm saving him," he explained.

The coach's eyes narrowed. "For what?"

"I don't know just yet."

"Cap," said Marty, "he won. I'm not denying that. But did you ever see a more ragged game? He had horseshoes all over him to get away with it."

"Well," Danny replied, "the big thing is that he did get away with it. And you say that a lucky pitcher is better than——"

"But there's a limit to luck," Marty cried. "Next time they would take his scalp in an inning."

BROKEN HARNESS

He was tumbling all over the place Saturday."

"Don't you give him any credit," Danny asked in a low tone, "for having pulled himself together the way he did?"

At that Marty whipped around and walked away. What was the use, he thought, of bandying words with a boy who thought he knew it all?

By the time the squad went back to the locker room Marty had overcome his anger. Tuesday night he and Danny sat down to plan next day's game against Franklin.

"Let's get this thing straight," said Danny. "I'm going to start Jerome against Franklin, and if he does well I'm going to send him after that last Monroe game."

Marty blinked. "Two games in four days, Cap?" he asked mildly.

"I don't mean it that way," said Danny. "I'm going to work him four innings to-morrow. Then we'll take him out no matter how he is going. If he can pitch four innings well, it will be the making of this nine, because when we take him out there will be nothing against him, and Saturday

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he'll have the confidence of the entire team."

"If he is pitching well," Marty argued, "why not let him go to the finish?"

"I want to keep him fresh for Saturday's game."

"But look here, Cap. If we're ahead and you take him out, and then we lose, this nine would go higher than a kite."

"It wouldn't. It would say we'd have won if Jerry had stayed. That will make confidence. I simply want this nine to find out how good he is. They'll start with him against Monroe just where they leave off with him against Franklin."

Marty was incredulous. "This doesn't look good to me," he complained.

"It looks mighty good to me," Danny insisted. "Out he comes after the fourth inning."

"All right," Marty agreed in a resigned voice. "You're the doctor. If I were the boss I'd either pitch him the whole distance or save him altogether."

"Just let's see how the game works my way," Danny pleaded. He wished that he could surrender to Marty, but he felt that if he did give in,

he would be sacrificing the success of the team for the sake of peace. He wasn't a boy who liked to fight for fight's sake. Once he had always been ready to mix things up, but that day was passed. He knew that some fellows—fellows who did not understand—would say that he had always crossed the coach. However, that could not be helped. It had happened that he had seen things from a different angle, and he had not felt that he could give in where he knew he was right.

Next day Jerome went in against Franklin in a far calmer frame of mind than he had been in the previous Saturday. Fortune favored him, too. He found Franklin eager to wipe out her previous defeat. Her players began hitting at anything, and Jerome kept feeding them curves. Thus, in the first two innings, not one of Franklin's players reached first base. Manor Hall had succeeded in getting Danny to third, but the captain had not scored.

In the fourth inning Franklin switched her tactics and began to wait the pitcher out. Before Jerome woke up to what was happening he

had three balls on the first batter and no strikes.

"Now," muttered Marty, "watch this bird wobble."

The nine felt a trifle uneasy, too. But Jerome, calmly attending to the business in hand, pitched two strikes. The batter swung at the next pitch, and was thrown out by Lee.

"One gone," Cross chirped cheerily. "That's a boy, Jerry."

The next two batters were quickly retired. It had begun to drizzle. When Danny came to the bench he said to Marty:

"Have Orth warm up King. Next inning is Jerry's last."

Manor did not score. Jerome went out to pitch the fourth inning.

The ball was now slippery. But at that Jerome issued only one pass. He was not hit safely. He struck out the last man. As he started for the bench Danny ran forward and started in with him.

"We're going to take you out, Jerry," he said. The pitcher's face fell. "Why, what's wrong?"

"I'm saving you for Monroe," said Danny.

The boy gave a little squeak of delight. They came to the bench. Danny ran his eyes over the substitutes. There, among the lot, sat Orth and King.

Danny turned to Marty. "Did they warm up?" he asked.

"No," Marty answered. "I thought it would be a fine thing for the nine to win to-day. Jerry is going good and——"

"Didn't we talk this whole thing over last night?" Danny demanded.

Every fellow's eyes were now on the captain and the coach. Some of the players breathed with an effort.

"Now, Cap," Marty soothed, "this is a no-score game so far and we had better keep Jerome where he is. We can't afford to lose——"

"We talked this over last night," Danny said again. He had to hold himself in check. To have Marty throw him down that way sent the hot blood to his head. "Warm up," he said to King. "I want you to start the sixth."

CAPTAIN DANNY

All along the bench there was suppressed excitement. Franklin was waiting in the field. The ball was wetter now. Danny saw that he would have to say something more to relieve the tension.

"Here!" he called. "I want bunts. They'll fall all over themselves handling that ball. They're bound to slip as they run. Lay it on the ground, Tal."

Talmage placed a bunt along the third-base line. Third-baseman slipped when he tried to stop his rush for the ball, and the batter was safe.

"That's the ticket," Danny cried. "Everybody bunt."

Three runs came in before the side was retired. Jerome went out.

"Easy," Danny cautioned. "Just put it over and trust to us. That ball's too wet to curve. Lay it over, Jerry."

Jerome did as he was told. Three Franklin boys tried hard, but their hits went straight at Green and White fielders. Jerome ran toward the gym leaving behind a game that was 3 to 0 in his favor.

BROKEN HARNESS

And that three run lead, even though King was touched up a bit, was enough to win the game. The nine crowded into the locker room flushed with success. Yet there was an atmosphere of worry about the place.

Danny had been vindicated. The game had gone as he had planned. He should have been glad. Instead he was miserable. After that clash on the bench nothing would pull the wool over the eyes of the fellows. Coach and captain were not pulling together, and the whole squad knew.

CHAPTER XI

A VOICE FROM THE YARD

DANNY was not the only person who left the gym feeling sick and sore in spirit. Marty Black went to his lodgings with the conviction that baseball affairs at Manor Hall were trembling on their foundations. After supper he sent a message across the Yard that he wanted to see Danny. The captain arrived half an hour later.

"I made a bad play to-day," the coach said frankly, "and I want to talk it over with you."

"I don't mind what happened so much," Danny replied just as frankly. "But how is this going to affect the players?"

"That's why I sent for you," said Marty.

Danny almost gasped. The coach worrying

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about how the fellows would feel was a sight new to him. Yet, seeing Marty in such a state of mind, he was only too eager to meet him half way.

"It's this way," Marty went on. "I thought it was a mistake to take Jerome out, and I think so yet. But I should have kept my mouth closed. Instead, I shot off my ideas, and then every bird on that bench began to stick out his eyes. Now, that won't do."

"Of course it won't," said Danny.

"I'm not worrying about your end, Cap. Just between me and you—no quarrelling, but just speaking truthful—I think you've messed up things quite a bit here and there. But the rules of the school make you boss, so all I can do is to sit back and let you go ahead. No offense, now."

"Of course not," Danny said stiffly. What was coming next, he wondered.

"Everything I've suggested," Marty continued, "you've thrown down. If that's the way all the captains have worked with Craig it's no wonder this school has been cleaned up. Well, things ran

CAPTAIN DANNY

along until this afternoon. Then, when I saw the way that game was going, I decided the best thing was to win it and give the team more heart. I didn't make any mistake in thinking that way. I made my mistake in saying what I thought. Get me, Cap?"

"I do," said Danny.

"Now, I'm pretty anxious to win that next game. It means a lot to me. I won't be here next year, but if I can leave here with the record of having won, I'll have a chance to coach another school next spring. That's the reason I sent for you. Your end of the game doesn't worry me at all, Cap. If you lose the game you'll worry for a day or two and then forget it. But it's bread and butter to me. Understand?"

"I understand."

"If I wasn't looking for something for next spring I'd tell you to fish or cut bait. Personally I think things would have gone better if you had left matters to me. I was playing baseball when you were spinning a top. However, you're the doctor. If you mix bad medicine, why, you're the

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one that has to take it. But I object to having to swallow some, too."

Danny stared at his fingernails and said nothing.

"I tell you these things, Cap, so you'll see where we stand. In public we must pull together. Isn't that right?"

"Right," said Danny.

"Well, from now until Saturday we must make a great fuss of each other whenever we meet. And we had better begin fussing to-night. What do you think of that?"

Had any other Manor Hall captain, Danny thought, ever listened to such a speech? He understood Marty's position thoroughly. Marty thought him a swell-headed, conceited kid with too much authority for his own good. Loyalty to the school cut no figure at all in the coach's desire for peace. Yet, regardless of the reason, Danny was glad of the chance to wear the mask of good fellowship. Even though they looked at things from different angles, he and the coach had much in common.

"Suppose we go out now," the boy suggested,

CAPTAIN DANNY

"and go to the candy shop for ice cream. There's always a bunch of fellows there, and they'll spread the news that we're chumming."

Marty reached for his cap. "That's the ticket," he said.

They had to pass the Yard to reach the candy shop, and there they lingered long enough to have a goodly number of the fellows see them. Later, as they ate their ice cream, students of the Green and White nudged each other and whispered, and went back to the dormitory building to spread the news. Shortly after nine o'clock the man and the boy separated.

"No hard feelings, Cap," said Marty. "I just told you how this whole game looks to me. Just the same, you can count on me to work hard to land a winner. I have my reasons for wanting to see this nine wallop Monroe on the nose."

"I understand," said Danny. "Give me a winner. That's all I ask."

"Me too," said Marty.

Dutton and Cross were in the room when Danny returned to the dormitory building. They looked

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at him expectantly, but the captain gave no information. Finally Cross asked:

"Were you and Marty at the candy shop?"

Danny nodded. "Of course we were. Why not?"

Cross looked bewildered. "I thought after that scrap on the bench——"

"Scrap!" cried Danny. "Because Marty for once happens to think one way and I think another is that a scrap? You're getting to be a regular calamity howler."

Cross switched his questions. "How about the Monroe game?" he asked eagerly. "Will Jerry work?"

"What did Jerry say?" the cautious Danny asked.

"Huh!" grunted the first-baseman. "Told me to see you. But I got the hunch he was keeping something back."

"I don't know who will pitch," said the captain. If Jerome was keeping the news quiet, what was the use of letting things out? Maybe the boy had a reason for holding a still tongue.

CAPTAIN DANNY

At the door Cross paused with his hand on the knob. "Then everything is all right between you and Marty, isn't it?"

"There was nothing wrong," Danny answered, "only for a moment."

The door opened and closed, and Cross was gone. Dutton grunted.

"Tell that to the marines," he invited.

"Tell what?" the captain demanded.

"That you and Marty have patched things up. What did he say to you?"

"He read the riot act," Danny confessed. "He told me he thought I was throwing sand in the machinery, but that he'd pull with me to the finish because he wanted a winner for the sake of his record. He wants to land another school for next spring."

"What does he think you are?" Dutton burst out.

"He thinks I'm a fresh kid with too much to say."

Dutton rubbed one finger across a calloused spot on his right hand. "Well," he observed at

A VOICE FROM THE YARD

last, "so long as he works with you for a winner nothing else should matter."

"It doesn't," said Danny. "I'm sorry things haven't gone better. I guess I'm to blame for some things. Anyway, what I did do I thought was for the best."

"Maybe that's what Marty thought when he did things," Dutton nodded. "This has been a queer season. Everybody trying to help and everybody spilling the beans."

The deciding game of the series was to be played at Manor Hall. Thursday the practice started again.

Now the work became a delicate problem. Here were boys who had reached a healthy speed, had slumped through over-confidence, and had then come back. How far they had come back was a question. Was it wise to still drive them and have them start the game tired, restless and worried? Or was it better to let them jog along easily, but at the same time do what work they did do with a seriousness of purpose?

Danny took this problem to Marty.

CAPTAIN DANNY

"Not too much work," said the coach emphatically. "You can't make them any better in two days. But they ought to get lots of practice at the bat. Anyway, a kid never thinks it's work to hit against a pitcher. That's play."

This time Danny accepted the man's advice. Thursday the 'Varsity got a half-hour of fielding practice. The pitchers warmed up easily, even Jerome. Then the substitutes were sent to the field and the 'Varsity players came to the plate. Steele and King pitched. Jerome trotted off to the locker room.

To the players and to Marty that settled one big question. Jerome was going to pitch. Cross grinned happily. Marty stared across the field with a clouded brow.

The knowledge that Jerome would work did not depress the fellows to-day. He had beaten Monroe once, and he had repulsed Franklin for five innings. Why, he wasn't the same Jerome at all. Danny heard whisperings such as these and grinned happily. His plan of campaign was going through. It had been good policy to take Jerry out.

He was still grinning cheerily when he returned to his room. He sat at the open window and stared down at the Yard. There were very few fellows in sight, and a peaceful quiet hung over the school grounds. He saw Marty come through the Yard and he saw him meet Pilgrim. Their voices carried up to the boy.

"Well," Pilgrim asked, "how goes it?"

"It could go better," said Marty. "Cap intends to pitch Jerome. I think he's making a bad blunder. That fellow's never been steady, and lately he's been having a spell of luck. He is a wild——"

The voices became fainter as the coach and the student member of the athletic committee moved away. Danny, at the window, shut his teeth hard.

"What right has he to talk that way in the Yard?" he demanded angrily of himself. "Of course he was talking only to Pilgrim, but his voice carried straight up to my window. Somebody else might have heard him."

At supper Danny was still nettled. Dutton asked him a few questions, and his replies were

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short and snappy. The catcher opened his eyes.

"What's wrong, Danny? Something bite you?"

"I'm thinking," said the captain.

"If that's what it does to you," Dutton advised, "you had better stop."

On the way out of the dining hall, Cross plucked at Danny's sleeve.

"I want to see you," he whispered.

"Come up to the room," Danny invited.

"Oh, come out to the Yard. It's hot upstairs."

So they went out to the cool green. Cross linked arms with Danny.

"You and Marty have another spill?" he asked.

Danny stared. "No."

"You're going to pitch Jerry, aren't you?"

"I am."

"Marty didn't kick, did he?"

"He said nothing to me."

The first-baseman stopped. "Then what's Jerry talking about? He says that Marty thinks you're making a bad blunder and that he had a lot of luck in his last few games— Hello! What's the matter, Danny?"

A VOICE FROM THE YARD

For the captain had caught him by the arm. "Did Jerry go straight to his room after leaving the practice?"

"I guess he did. Why?"

"Did he stay in his room?"

"He was there when I came in. Why? What's up?"

"Nothing," said Danny. "Jerry's heard something, that's all."

"But what did he hear?"

"He heard Marty tell all that to Pilgrim," Danny cried desperately. "Jerry's room is right over mine. Marty didn't think anybody but Pilgrim would hear him, but I'll bet a brass dollar right now that Jerry's off his game again. I can talk control to Jerry for a week and he takes it right, but as soon as Marty speaks Jerry goes into the ditch."

Cross shook his head. "I—I wouldn't say he was in the ditch this time, Danny, but——"

"But what?"

"He's mighty close to the brink," said the first-baseman.

CHAPTER XII

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

DANNY had spoken the truth. No matter how well Jerome might be going, Marty was able to upset him completely. It seemed to be one of those rare cases that cannot be argued away. It just happened. Let Marty say, "Too high there, Jerry," in that tired, despairing voice he could adopt on occasion, and no one knew where the pitcher would throw the ball on his next attempt.

The captain did not dare go up for a talk with Jerome. Perhaps the boy would come around after a night's sleep. So Danny cautioned Cross not to discuss baseball with the pitcher.

"You just bet I won't," said Cross.

Danny didn't get any too much comfort out

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of the fact that Jerry was on the brink but had not yet toppled. On the brink, he thought, was plenty bad enough. In a game as important as the deciding battle with Monroe a pitcher wanted to be right. Not almost right, but right. Almosts wouldn't do, and on the brink was a pretty bad case of almost. A fellow on the brink might give an extra hit or an extra base on balls. And either that extra hit or that extra base on balls might spell defeat.

Danny came back to the room. Dutton was at his study table, fussing with the spikes of his baseball shoes.

"Well," he observed, "your walk with Cross didn't do you much good."

Danny started. "Why?"

"You look grouchier than when you were at supper. What's wrong? Anything the matter with Jerome?"

The captain forced a laugh. "Nix! He's all right. I'm worrying, Dut. I guess this Monroe game is on my nerves."

"Take a warm bath," the catcher advised, "and

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go to bed. There's one thing sure. I wouldn't captain a team at this school for love or money."

"The next time a fellow talks captain to me," Danny flared, "I'll punch him in the nose."

There was morning practice next day—just a light, breezy drill. The pitchers worked a little while, and Jerome showed a falling off. It was not much, to be sure, but it was enough to send Dutton to Danny.

"Come over and watch Jerry," he invited.

Danny shook his head. "Not now, Dut. I know what you mean. Send him to the locker room."

And there, half an hour later, the captain found the pitcher. The boy was dressing quietly.

"Anything wrong?" Danny asked.

"Same old story," said Jerome.

Danny pretended surprise. "What now?"

"Marty said in the Yard last night—" The boy swallowed hard. "He didn't mean that he should be heard, I guess, but I was at my window. He was talking to Pilgrim, and he said I wouldn't

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do for Monroe, and that you were making a mistake, and that my last two games were luck."

"And you're worrying about that?" Danny demanded, as though surprised.

Jerome nodded.

"Oh, look here," the captain cried. "You've already beaten Monroe in one game, and you held Franklin right in your hand. That ought to give you confidence."

"It should," Jerome admitted. "What's the matter with Marty? What hold has he on me? As soon as he starts to criticise I wilt."

"You shouldn't."

"Perhaps not. But Marty has been in baseball so long. He has seen so many pitchers. He ought to know if a fellow can pitch or not."

Now Danny was angry. "Isn't it possible for Marty to make a mistake?" he cried.

"Maybe," said Jerome. "But when he's always knocking me— Why doesn't he sometimes say a good word for me, Danny?"

"He says lots of them," the captain said stoutly. "You get dressed and forget this foolishness."

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The pitcher's words had given the captain a new thought. The boy complained that Marty never said a good word. Suppose the coach would give a bit of praise?

Jerome was on his way to the door. Danny walked with him.

"You come back this afternoon, Jerry," he said. "Another easy warm up for about ten minutes won't hurt you."

"All right," said Jerome.

When the rest of the squad came in to dress Danny was still in uniform. The captain took Marty aside.

"Wait in," he whispered. "I want to talk to you after the fellows go."

"About what?"

"Jerome."

Marty lifted his eyes. "Getting wise to him, Cap? He didn't have much this morning."

"I know it," said Danny. Under his breath he added: "And I know why."

Cross was the last player to go. He stared back at Danny and the coach, hesitated, and finally

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went reluctantly through the doorway. Instantly Marty turned to Danny:

"Well, Cap?"

"You had a talk with Pilgrim last night in the Yard. Jerome heard every word you said."

Marty knitted his brows. "I had a talk with Pilgrim? Oh, yes. Well, what about it?"

"That's what has thrown Jerome off. He's worried."

"About what?"

"About you not having confidence in him."

"I haven't," Marty admitted candidly.

Danny bit his lips. "Look here, Marty, whether you have or not, that's no reason for you to talk freely where somebody might hear you. It's all right to tell Pilgrim. He's on the athletic committee and knows enough to keep his mouth shut. But to say these things so that you're overheard——"

"Look here, Cap," Marty cried; "you're all wrong on this. Why should he be worried about what I think? Does he expect everybody to believe he's a wonder? Why, look at presidential

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elections. Maybe almost two million people vote against the man who wins. Does that stop him taking office?"

"This is different," Danny argued. "He says you've seen pitchers enough to know a good one or a bad one. That's why he's worried."

"Too bad there aren't a few more people who think I know a pitcher when I see one," Marty hinted.

Danny walked over to the lockers and shut one or two that had been carelessly left open. He came back to the coach.

"You want this game won for your record," he said earnestly. "Then the thing for you to do is to get this nine in shape, every man of it. What you think of Jerome is out of the question. A few good words from you would help him a lot."

"How do you know that?"

"He said so. I'm going to pitch Jerome, and that's settled. It seems to me that the best thing you could do would be to give him some heart."

"All right, Cap. If your mind's made up to use him I'll do what I can. Want me to see him?"

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"He'll be out this afternoon for a ten-minute warm up. You take him."

Marty nodded slowly. "All right. But don't blame me if his screws are loose."

The coach was really desirous of helping the pitcher. But then again he was one of those men who, no matter what happens, see but one side. He had a single point of view.

Now he tried to change his viewpoint. The spirit was there, and for a while he quite convinced himself that it would be easy to make Jerome believe that all was well. But soon came doubts to his mind. All he could picture was a series of wild deliveries from the pitcher. That sort of thinking soon had him back in the mental rut.

Yet, when he came to the field that afternoon he told himself that he was really helping the captain. He felt a sense of pleasure, too, in the thought that if anybody was to make Jerome effective, he was the only person who could do the job thoroughly.

Once the players were at the stations, Marty

went in to the bench. He did not want to come right down on Jerome and call for deliveries. That might look as though he was making a raid upon the boy. He sat on the bench and watched Jerome as he talked to Steele and King.

They were a clean, set-up lot, these three pitchers. Steele and King knew that Jerry would pitch, but they showed no resentment. They were his companions of the Green and White nine. It was his fortune to pitch the game. They sincerely wished him well.

On Marty the comradeship of the three was lost. He admired the sturdy width of King's shoulders and wished that that boy was going to the mound. He could not force himself to have faith in Jerry. He suffered an absolute lack of confidence in anything that Jerome might do.

When he thought the time was ripe, he went out with a big mitt under his arm. He nodded to Steele and King. He spoke to Jerry.

"Throw me a few," he invited.

They went off a short distance. Jerome, with

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the knowledge that Marty didn't want him to pitch, began rather wildly.

"Here!" Marty called. "This is the pan. Now, stick it over just where I hold my glove."

Jerome sent one in exactly on the spot, but it was a straight ball.

"They'd lace that a mile," said Marty. "When you're in the hole don't put one over the exact middle, or good-by. Put something on it."

Jerome tried to throw a cross-fire. In his agitation he got them too far on the outside corner. Marty kept telling him that he'd have to do better than that. But Jerome did no better.

"I'm going to call them on you," the coach warned.

He was handling the boy with more consideration than he had ever shown him. But his efforts were completely missing fire. Had he kept up a genial "Come on, Jerry; you'll get going right in a moment. Try a little harder this time. You have the stuff. Make it be good," the result would probably have been different. But to Marty's mind that was a mollycoddle method. He did not

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believe in it. A pitcher either had the stuff or he didn't, and if he didn't have it and you refrained from announcing that fact, you did him a wonderful kindness by not bawling him out.

Danny wandered over just about the time that Marty began to call balls and strikes. He could see that the session had not done the pitcher any good. He heard Marty say, "There's a base on balls," and a moment later, "There's four balls again."

Danny saw that he must put a stop to this. Fearful lest he should cause trouble by immediately calling a halt, he stood beside Marty for a few minutes. Then he sent Jerome over to where the players were getting their last batting practice.

Marty shook his head mournfully. "Cap," he said, "I hope the Monroe coach doesn't tell his nine to wait that bird out. He won't get one ball out of three over."

The practice was soon stopped. The boys were sent to the locker room for their shower baths. Danny and Marty walked in slowly.

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"Well," said the coach, "I tried to encourage him, but I don't see as it did any good."

Dutton, Cross and Danny walked back across the Yard. They sat on the dormitory steps. By this time Dutton had smelled that something was wrong. Danny confessed to him what it was that had upset Jerome.

"So Marty was to encourage him to-day, eh?" the catcher asked. "I wonder what he calls encouragement?"

Cross laughed.

"I wonder," he echoed.

Dutton suddenly stared across the Yard. "I have an idea," he said thoughtfully. "I catch Jerry, and he takes some stock in what I say. Suppose I room with him to-night. Cross can take my bed. I could talk to him about how good he is. Oh, I'm some talker when I get going. Of course, nothing might come of it. But then, again, perhaps he'd begin to think that I knew something worth while."

Cross was enthusiastic for the plan. They went upstairs. Dutton took from his bureau some

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things he would need. They walked up another flight of stairs to Cross's room.

Jerome was there. He stared curiously as Dutton dropped his things on a bed.

"Well, old sledge hammer, I'm going to sleep with you to-night," the catcher cried.

"What for?" the pitcher asked.

"We'll talk over Monroe's batters. Danny has Marty's score-book downstairs. We ought to be able to dope out what to pitch to each of those fellows, eh?"

"We ought to," Jerome said eagerly. "Where will Cross go? With Danny?"

Cross nodded. "That's the idea. And Danny and I will make up schemes to trap Monroe's base runners. Say, this is team-work, isn't it?"

"And then some," said Danny.

The nine that night, for the first time since the season opened, was to eat by itself. There was no baseball training table at Manor Hall. But usually, the night before a deciding game, tables were set in a little ante-room off from the main dining hall, and there the players took

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their supper. To this meal the coach always came.

Danny and Cross, as they came downstairs after leaving Dutton could hear the clatter of these tables being put into position. To-night the first bell would call the students to their usual meal. A second bell would summon the baseball players.

When that second bell rang there was a rush for the ante-room. Jerome came down feeling better already because of the cheery presence of Dutton, but still nervous and jerky. Most of the fellows sensed that he was rocky, but they attributed this to the fact that he was worrying about the morrow. One and all began to relate how he had defeated Meade, how he had stopped Monroe, how he had held Franklin safe. None spoke louder or more loyally than King and Steele.

Marty, arriving late, came in while the chorus of praise was at its highest. He ate in silence and listened. Suddenly Baggs turned to him.

"How about it, Marty? What do you think?"

"Well," said Marty with the air of a man who had given the problem great thought, "if he'll

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stick them over the plate and not go up in the air—
There's your answer. It all depends upon what
Jerry does."

Now, if there was one thing in the world that
should not have been said to the pitcher in his
present state of mind, wildness was that one thing.
Every fellow at the table knew this, and so did
Danny.

To the captain it seemed that despite all his
pretensions Marty was determined to have the
Green and White lose this game. In this thought,
of course, Danny did the coach a grave wrong.
But Marty's words had come as the final blow
upon nerves already strained to a snapping ten-
sion. Danny completely forgot himself. He saw
red just as he used to in the days before he came
up to school. Indignation burned through his
veins. He sprang to his feet.

"Don't you know any better than to talk like
that?" he cried angrily. "I thought you had some
sense."

Baggs moved quietly in his chair. Cross start-
ed a low whistle and quickly stopped it. The

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rest of the fellows were momentarily stunned.

During that moment Danny's sanity returned. It wasn't his nature to talk disrespectfully to his elders.

"I beg your pardon, Marty," he said miserably. "I didn't mean that."

But Marty had also come to his feet. He was leaning across the table and anger showed plainly in his face. He wasn't going to take talk like that from a swell-headed schoolboy. He said as much, too, and a few of the players gasped.

"I've said I'm sorry," Danny broke in. "I'm ashamed of myself, too. Let's go out in the hall and talk this over."

"We'll talk it over here," said Marty.

And right there Marty Black made the mistake of his life. He had seen Danny's hot temper sputter over, and he had seen the boy quickly cool off. An argument, he thought, could go only one way, and that his way. From the way things shaped up now there were likely to be clashes of authority before the last man was out to-morrow, and right here and now Marty decided that he'd

settle the question of who was boss. He wanted to run that deciding Monroe game. Now was the time to show the squad how weak and vain-glorious their captain was.

"This isn't the place for an argument," Danny pleaded.

"We'll talk this thing right out before the players," Marty repeated stubbornly. "We'll let them see what's what."

Danny turned cold. If he walked out of the room without a word Marty, left behind, might harangue the players and knock things out completely. There was only one path open to him. He would have to stay.

"All right," he said. "We'll talk this out and settle matters. But first I'm sorry I spoke hastily. I apologize again."

"Does that mean," Marty asked, "that you are going to let go and run this thing as it should be run the rest of the season?"

"If you mean," Danny answered slowly, "that I am going to sacrifice this nine to you, you are mistaken. I am responsible for it, and while I

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admit that I do not know one-third the baseball that you know, yet I understand these fellows better. If I felt that it would do the slightest good to this nine to resign and get out, I would do it in a minute."

"You stay where you are," Baggs said distinctly.

Danny shook his head. He didn't want the players mixing into this.

"I know it wouldn't do any good to have me resign," he said. "It would only jumble matters. So long as I am captain I am going to stick to my responsibility. I'm going to see things through. And this nine is going to win."

"Not if you pitch Jerome," said Marty, now quite oblivious to anything but the scrap with Danny.

The pitcher shivered. King laid a hand on Jerome's shoulder—the steady hand of true friendship.

"There you go," Danny cried, this time with heat, "picking at Jerome again. That shows exactly what the trouble is and has been. If I felt

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that there was any man on this nine that I didn't want to have play good ball, I'd feel that I ought not to have the job."

"Do you mean that I don't want to see Jerome pitch good ball?"

"I don't know what to think. All along there has been a feeling that you didn't want Jerome to pitch. It made no difference to you whether he worked a good game or a poor game. Now I'm for winning the Monroe series with any pitcher, and I know, as does everybody else here, that Jerome is the hardest man to hit that we have."

"When he gets them over," Marty amended.

"He gets them over when he pitches to me or to Dutton. He's in shape now——"

"After the way he showed this morning?"

"He's in shape," Danny insisted. "You did your best to knock the confidence out of him, and that made me mad."

"I tried to give him confidence," Marty answered hotly. "You asked me to go out to-day and put some heart into him."

"And how did you do it?" Danny cried. "By

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calling balls on him with an air that said that you thought he was hopeless. If that is your way of getting a pitcher in shape for Monroe I wonder how Jerome can put anything on a ball."

"He can't put much on it and get it anywhere," Marty flashed back.

"To-morrow will answer that," came from Danny.

The coach leaned across the table. "You mean that Jerome starts to-morrow no matter what I say?"

"That's what I mean," the captain answered after a moment's hesitation. "I'm mighty sorry we can't agree, but I have the responsibility, and my judgment says to pitch him. He came out all right before in the pinch, and he'll pull us through to-morrow."

"All right, Cap, that settles it." Marty turned sharply from the table. "I'm through."

Danny's lips went white. "Just a minute," he cried. Do you mean that you resign?"

"That's what I mean. I resign. I quit. I'll either run this nine or you'll run it."

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"I'll run it, thank you," Danny said slowly. "I accept all the responsibility. I'm sorry you're going, and I may as well tell you that I don't think much of the way you've quit on me."

Marty passed down the length of the table and out into the hall. He slammed the door behind him. They heard his footsteps echo, at first sharply, then fainter and fainter. At last their noise ceased.

Jerome stood up a bit unsteadily. "Danny!" he said.

The captain ran around to him. "All right, Jerry. Don't let this upset you."

The boy blinked his eyes. "You and Marty have broken," he said. "It's all on account of me. You've stood for me. You've been standing for me all season. Now I want to make you a promise. I'll go in to-morrow and—and——"

"All right, Jerry," said Danny. "You'll pitch your head off for me, won't you?"

"And then some," said the boy.

After that every fellow was on his feet. They crowded around Danny. They told him that they

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would back him up, that the Monroe game would be theirs.

"Of course we'll win," the captain cried. "Come on, let's eat. We can talk while we eat."

They went back to their places at the table. But now their vigorous appetites were gone. They toyed with their food. They stole glances at each other. Nobody spoke.

CHAPTER XIII

RESTORING CONFIDENCE

IT did not take Danny long to determine that this clash with Marty Black had broken his baseball machine into small pieces. With a few of the players the coach had never been popular. Others he had alienated. Nevertheless, they felt his loss. They were boys; he was a man with big-league experience, and in the main it had been comforting to have him on the bench.

Several times the captain tried to start conversation. Cross or Baggs or Dutton strove manfully to say something, but always the voices died away and the restless silence came again. At last Danny could stand the strain no longer. He stood up at his place.

"Fellows!" he said.

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They all looked at him. Worried shadows lay on several faces.

"You've heard what Marty had to say. He thinks that Jerry won't do. But that doesn't mean that Jerry won't do. It's only what Marty thinks. All through the season he's thought that way. Yet Jerry has been getting better all the time."

"Correct," Steele called. "He was the only one who held Monroe in the first game."

"And he won the second," King added.

"And he tied Franklin into knots," Dutton chimed in. "I know. I was catching him."

"There!" cried Danny. "You see what they think of him, the fellows who should know, the pitchers and the catchers. We're going to pitch him to-morrow, and I want to tell you now that Monroe will not hit him. More than that, he's going to put the ball over the plate. He's not going to pass men. I know he was off this morning. But you don't want to forget this—he has been off every time Marty caught him. He has been afraid of Marty. He shouldn't have been, but he has been all along. How about it, Jerry?"

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The pitcher nodded. "It—it was that speech when we had our meeting—about losing games last year through passing men and about him having our records."

"Now, it's up to us to field a good game behind Jerry," the captain urged. "If we support him he'll do his part."

"Of course he will," cried King.

"So it comes down to a question of our hitting. This nine has shown a good many times that it can hit, that it has no tail end to its batting list, and that it has no players who are much given to striking out. We can outbat Monroe. We didn't hit Maxim that first time, but we weren't in shape to hit anybody. We were all puffed up with our own importance. To-morrow we will expect a fight, and we'll be prepared."

"You bet we will," cried Cross.

"Then we have another advantage. The game is to be played here. Everything favors us. And I want to remind you outfielders that it hasn't rained in two weeks. The ground is hard and baked out. The balls will bound hard and come

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fast. Don't let them get by you. Stop them with your bodies if you must, but don't let them get past. Don't let Monroe get extra bases."

The outfielders nodded.

Danny stared about the tables. "I—I guess that's all, fellows. Stand behind Jerry. He'll win for us. And now a good, big, rousing cheer for Manor Hall."

The cheer was given. In the general dining hall the students heard and whispered that the nine felt good.

Farrell, the right-fielder, came to Danny as soon as the meal was over.

"I thought something like this would happen," he whispered. "I think you did the right thing."

"How will the players take it?" Danny asked anxiously.

"That's not the question. The nine will pull itself together if it's left alone. But how will the school take it?"

Half an hour later Danny knew. The news of the break buzzed through the dormitory building from room to room. From the corridors came

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the sound of clamoring voices. Next the students were out in the Yard. Marty Black gone on the eve of the big game? Impossible.

But Pilgrim, when they came to him with questions, said nervously that Marty was through. Had he had a row with Danny? Pilgrim mopped his face with a handkerchief and said yes, that there had been a row. And at the the students stared at each other aghast. What, they asked, was Danny thinking about? What had bitten him?

Keating, as editor of *The Greenie* and moulder of school opinion, was soon surrounded by breathless, excited boys. Had he heard anything?

"I haven't," he said. "But there's one thing I'll take a guess at. This row wasn't Danny's fault by a long shot."

Somebody suggested that they go up and see Danny. A delegation stormed the dormitory stairways. But Danny, hearing them coming, waved a weary hand at Cross.

"Lock that door," he said.

Cross turned the key. Danny lowered the light.

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When the knuckles of students beat a tattoo on the door there was no response. Finally they went away. Later a faint tap sounded.

"That's Dutton," said Danny.

Cross let in the catcher. Dutton came only a few feet into the room.

"I can't stay," he said. "I want to get back to him. Some fool was up there asking him if he wasn't the cause of the split. That settled Jerry good and proper. He's walking the floor now and groaning that he's done nothing all season but cause worry, and that the school will blame him for everything."

"You tell him for me—" Danny began, and stopped. "Oh, I don't know what to tell him. Tell him anything. If this keeps up we'll have to pitch King or Steele whether we want to or not."

Dutton departed. Danny and Cross sat in the room and stared at the walls. Eight o'clock sounded. A few minutes later another tap sounded on the door.

"It's Pilgrim," a voice whispered.

Again Cross opened the door. The light was still turned low. The student member of the athletic committee peered about the room.

"Where's Danny?" he asked.

"Here!" Danny answered.

"Craig wants you."

"Craig!" Danny bounded out of his chair.

"Is Craig back? When did he get back? Where is he?"

"Ssh!" warned Pilgrim. "Nobody knows he's back yet. He's in my room. He wants you."

Pilgrim's room was one floor down. Danny took the stairs two at a time. He stalked in and closed the door, and stood with his back against it.

Craig was there. There could be no doubt of that. The old coach sat over by the window. The flush of health was in his cheeks, the hollows were gone, his eyes were bright.

"Well," said the man, "aren't you glad to see me?"

"Glad?" Danny burst out. "Oh, Craig I cannot tell you how glad I am. There's been trouble here, and now I'm up to my neck."

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The man pointed to a chair. "Bring that here, Danny, and sit down. You won the second Monroe game, and you stopped Franklin. You should be in good shape. But Pilgrim said something about a row with Marty Black. Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Has Marty resigned?"

"Yes."

"What was the fight about?"

"About Jerome. Marty's been against Jerry all season, and——"

"Suppose you start at the beginning and tell me the whole story," Craig broke in.

Soon Danny was deep in an explanation of the entire season's happenings. The old coach sat thoughtfully listening to the history of the affair. Once in a while he muttered a soft "So!" but otherwise he let the captain go on uninterrupted.

Finally, when Danny stopped for breath, just previous to his description of the final row, Craig said dryly:

"What do you think the use of a coach is if the captain overrides him all the time?"

"I wasn't overriding him, Craig."

"But that is the way it must have looked to the team and to Marty."

"I'm sure it didn't," Danny maintained stoutly. "I know that half the nine will tell you so. I suppose some of the fellows side with Marty——"

"Hold on!" cried Craig. "I don't like this business of taking sides. Have you an idea that coach and captain are like the captains of rival teams? If you get that idea in your head there is no hope for you either in school or in college."

Danny became embarrassed. "Of course I don't think that. I know that coach and captain must pull together, but here was a case where we couldn't pull."

"Was it your fault?"

"Perhaps it was sometimes," Danny admitted thoughtfully. "I know though that I did everything that I could. I only interfered when I thought it meant defeat if I didn't."

"I don't like that word 'interfered,'" said Craig. "It has a bad sound. Marty Black is a man, and you're only a boy."

"That—that's what made half the trouble," Danny gulped. "He thought I was a boy with too much authority. He went to the athletic committee when I named the pitcher for the first game."

"You picked Jerome?"

"Yes. You should have been here, Craig. Marty let Jerry see right from the start that he had no use for him. And a group of us—Dutton, Cross and me—jockeyed him every way until we brought him around. He's pitched some great games. If he went out and gave a few hits and only one or two passes, Marty said he was lucky. If he passed a lot of men and pitched himself out of the holes, Marty said he was wild and gave him no credit for his heart."

"Does Jerry know of this row you and Marty had to-night?"

"He was there."

Craig whistled softly. "How does he take it, Danny?"

"He's all broken up. Oh, Craig, you've just come back in time. You can straighten out Jerry and you can straighten out the nine."

"So the fellows are upset, too, are they?"

Danny nodded. "Yes. They speak with a brave mouth, but down in their shoes they're shaking."

"Think it would do any good if I showed myself to-night?"

"Good!" cried Danny. "Why the whole school is buzzing. I'm being rapped, and Jerry's getting his. As soon as the nine sees you, it will forget its troubles. The school will stop condemning. And unless I miss my guess Jerry will spruce up at once."

Craig stood up. "All right, Danny," he said briskly; "I'll come to the rescue. I came back for the game, not for trouble. As I reached the Yard I heard excited voices, and I knew that something was wrong. So I came quietly to Pilgrim's room." He laid his hand on Danny's shoulder. "I hate to think of you beginning your career as school captain in a row with a coach. That's the worst thing you could do."

"But I never had a row with you, Craig?"

"I don't believe you ever will. We had a few

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upsets when you first came here, but I lay that to your red hair. And now, Danny, whether you were right or wrong, get it out of your head. Make a good big resolution never again to have trouble with a coach."

"I won't if the coach is you," said Danny.

"You're hopeless," said Craig, but his voice was kind and gentle, as though he understood. "The big thing is to-morrow's game. There must be no slipup anywhere. I'll talk with some of the boys. Whatever you do, hide your worry. The whole thing hangs on that. If Jerome can stay steady— Oh, by the way. What pitcher did Marty favor?"

"King."

"And how is King acting in this row?"

"King's a brick," said Danny.

"Ah!" Craig smiled. "Well, if Jerome can keep steady, the confidence of this nine is going to grow with every inning. By the middle of the game they ought to be unbeatable. But if Jerome goes wild——"

"Yes?" Danny said eagerly.

"Your nine is going to fall like a pack of cards."

"He won't go wild," said Danny sturdily.

Craig stepped out of the room, followed by Danny, and went down the stairs. Four or five fellows saw him as he passed along the hallway.

"Craig!" yelled one. "Craig is back."

Boys came piling from their rooms. Talmage saw him and did a crazy jig on the stairs. Baggs, in his joy, threw one leg over the banisters and slid down a flight. And so it went until the coach reached the Yard.

There the students surrounded him. Was he going to take charge of the nine? Craig smiled.

"I'll be on the bench to-morrow," he said.

And then they cheered uproariously. The nine began to stick out its chest. The fellows quite forgot that there had ever been a row with Marty Black.

After a while, when the gathering was rejoicing with noise and racket, the coach plucked at Danny's arm.

"I'm going up to see Jerome," he said.

He pushed his way good naturedly through the

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crowd. Boys wanted to follow him, but he waved them back. He went upstairs, knocked on a door, turned the knob softly and stepped in.

Jerome, lost in his own thoughts, had not heard the knock. He had not even bothered to investigate the noise from the Yard. A shadow fell across the wall.

"What was the noise about, Dut?" he asked listlessly. Receiving no answer he looked around. "Craig!" he whispered after he had stared a while in silence.

"Craig it is," said the man.

"Will—will you be with us to-morrow?"

"Yes."

Jerome's face lit up. In a moment he seemed to be a different boy. And he said, too, just what Danny had said.

"Oh, Craig, I'm glad you're back."

"And I'm glad I came back," was the answer. "I want to talk to you, Jerry. Suppose we take a walk."

The pitcher reached eagerly for his cap.

The coach led the way down a rear staircase.

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They came out in the back of the dormitory building. They skirted the Yard. Not one of the excited students saw them. Soon they were in a quiet village street.

"Jerry," said Craig, "there often comes a time to man or boy when he is right up against it. He must do something for himself and his friends. I know all about your troubles this season. But your troubles are now of secondary importance. Danny has been your friend all along. He has run into trouble because of you. Now, this game doesn't make so much difference to you. You will pitch other games. But to-morrow's game makes or mars Danny Phipps. Do you get me?"

"I don't," said the pitcher. "I can tell you that this game makes a lot of difference to me."

"You don't understand. You are really only beginning as a pitcher. Isn't that so?"

"Well, I've been pitching only a few years."

"Of course. You have lots of pitching ahead of you. A good day or a bad day isn't really going to have any bearing on what you will be able to do a year from now. But Danny has got

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to make good this year as captain. Do you realize that?"

"Well," said Jerome, "I know he wants to make good but——"

"But you don't see how it runs after that? If Danny fails now, he will never get another captaincy—either in school or in college. Captains who quarrel with coaches get a black eye unless they prove their cases and make good. Now, Danny is in the position of having quarreled with Marty Black. There is only one person who can pull him through and that person is you."

Jerome kept step with the coach, but he did not speak.

"You have worked with Danny," Craig went on. "He has coached you. He tells me that you can get them over, that you have control. Now, Jerry, let me tell you this; Monroe will not hit you. It is only a question of whether you will pass the batters."

"Marty says——" began the pitcher. He hesitated. "Perhaps I ought not to say what Marty says."

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"Tell me."

"Well, Marty says that when I take so much pains to put them over they come up too good, and that any nine is likely to hit them."

"Did Monroe hit you the last time?"

"Not enough to win."

"Then I guess you can forget what Marty said. When you must put that ball over, put it over. This nine will do some work for you, I hope."

"Of course they will," cried Jerome.

"There is only one important thing. If you get in the hole and have to put it over, keep it low, if anything. I mean don't give a ball squarely between the waist and the shoulder. Get it down between the waist and the knee. Then, if the batter connects, the hit will be a short one."

"Why, that is what Danny's been telling me," said Jerome.

"Danny's stood by you," said Craig.

The boy nodded soberly. "I'll do anything to make good for Danny," he said.

But, somehow, Craig did not detect the right ring in that speech. The boy didn't have the

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spirit the coach wanted to see. He wanted Jerome to sleep soundly with a feeling of confidence that would stay with him through the night and say a cheery "Hello!" to him when he opened his eyes in the morning.

They turned back toward the Yard. Then:

"Did you ever hear of Roberts," Craig asked, "Josiah Roberts?"

"The new pitcher Midvale has?" Jerome asked.

The coach nodded. "I was over there day before yesterday. I saw him work."

"He must be good," Jerome said eagerly. "He won his last eight games, and he's pulled Midvale from sixth to third place in the State League."

"He's built something like you," Craig said idly.

"Is he?"

"Yes. He uses that same overhand cross-fire that you use, too. Of course, he's bigger and older than you, but if it wasn't for that I'd have thought I was watching you in action."

Jerome's face flushed with pleasure. To be

compared with the great Josh Roberts was fame indeed.

"They can't hit him," said Craig. "And for the same reason Monroe won't hit you."

"What same reason?"

"The reason that you both pitch the same sort of ball the same way. You're a small edition of Josh Roberts, Jerry."

After that, as they finished their walk toward the Yard, Jerome's voice became more confident. He told Craig a cheery "Good night." He came back after he had gone a few steps and whispered, "You've made me feel bully, Craig."

"Nonsense!" laughed the coach. "You were bully all the time and you didn't know it."

Yet the man turned away with a smile. He was quite sure that Jerome's sleep would be sound. And next morning Dutton reported that the pitcher had not stirred all through the night—at least not during those hours of the night when the catcher had been awake.

The day of the big game had at last arrived. Quiet little Manor Hall rocked with noise. Craig

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came to the dormitory building early in the morning. He had spent the night at the village inn, for Marty Black was still in possession of his old rooms.

The uproar had scarcely any effect on the baseball squad. The boys ate a quiet, unhurried breakfast. Jerome, looking very serious but very determined, too, spent much of the morning in his room. At 12:30 o'clock the squad assembled again and ate sparingly. Half an hour later, the students left the dormitory building, marched across the Yard, across the road to the athletic field, and then up to the locker room.

They took their time about dressing. Uniforms were examined to see that all was well with them. The spikes in the shoes were tested. At last the squad was ready to go forth to where the stands waited to greet them.

Jerome was apparently in good shape. But then, as both Craig and Danny knew, appearances are sometimes deceptive. The coach played a canny trick. While Danny, not knowing what

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was happening scarcely dared to breath, Craig took Jerome over to a window.

"Is that a bruise on the wrist of your right arm?" he asked.

Jerome held forth the hand. The fingers were steady as a rock.

"No bruise there," he said.

"It must have been a shadow I saw," said Craig.

Jerome went back to the squad, and with the others soon passed out to the field. Danny came last. Craig fell into step with him.

"Smile, Danny," said the coach. "He'll pull through for you."

CHAPTER XIV

FOR THE GREEN AND WHITE

A ROAR went up from the stands as the players ran out. Manor Hall's cheer swept the field.

Watch them fight! Watch them fight!

Watch them fight!

Green and White! Green and White!

Green and White!

Manor, Manor, Manor, Manor, Manor!

Hall! Hall! Hall!

"Watch them fight," thought Danny. And under his breath: "Ah! Watch them fight."

For all that Craig said that Jerome would do, Danny wisely watched all three of his pitchers. Steele apparently had nothing but a straight ball and not much speed. King had speed to spare,

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but not much of anything else. Danny was quickly aware that Jerome was his only hope. If Jerry failed, he did not have a rescue pitcher worth his salt.

So he turned his attention to his youngest pitcher. As he watched Jerome sending them in, he could see that the boy was full of life and determination. His outcurve was working well, and he had his cross-fire under control. Orth, who was receiving until Dutton should be ready, turned to Danny.

"See that break? They won't hit that to-day."

Danny's spirits took a sudden rise. The only question was, could Jerry keep them over the plate. The captain walked over to Dutton.

"Ralph," he said, "it is up to you. If you can make Jerry keep them over this game is won."

"He'll be all right, Danny. He told me that when Craig talked about a ball above the knees, he could feel his courage increasing, because that was the way you had coached him. This nine is with you to a man. And then, with Craig on the bench——"

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"I know," said Danny.

The old coach sat there with the same old score-book on his knees. It looked as though he had never been away so much at home was he. And the players felt a strange new peace.

Monroe went first to bat. As Danny and the fellows started for the field Farrell whispered that Marty had a seat right behind the bench.

There was a big cheer for Jerome as he went to the mound—a long, rousing cheer of confidence. Danny pounded a fist unto his glove.

"Oh, if he only shows control right from the start!" he muttered to himself, "what a help it will be!"

Jerome showed control. Pitching slowly and carefully, he mowed the Monroe batters down. For three innings they came methodically to the plate and as methodically marched back to the bench.

Meanwhile, after having failed to score in both the first and the second inning, Manor got a tally in the third. Farrell, who had played a strong, earnest game all season, led off with a two-bagger.

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On Dutton's slow splash to the box, he raced to third. Jerome struck out.

Perhaps it was his dash to third that aroused Farrell to a spirit to try his legs again. Cross went after Maxim's first pitch, a bad ball. Plainly the Monroe pitcher was going to have an easy time with Manor Hall's first-baseman. So Farrell, dancing about on third, signalled that he would steal home.

He did not go in as the pitcher wound up. Oh, no! Foxy Farrell had a game that was worth two of that. As Maxim threw his second pitch—a called ball—Farrell danced in. As the Monroe catcher secured the ball, he danced back toward the bag. The Monroe catcher, secure in his belief that the runner would go all the way back to the base, tossed the ball to Maxim. And as the ball left his hand, Farrell whirled about and dashed for the plate.

It was an unexpected play. It was baseball strategy. The stands shrieked aloud. Manor's rooters yelled for Farrell to come on, and Monroe's followers begged Maxim to throw the ball.

Maxim, upset by so daring a play, threw high to the catcher, and Farrell was across the plate before that boy could bring down his arms.

"There's your lead, Jerry," cried Danny.

Jerome grinned. That was the way to back up a fellow, wasn't it? The fourth inning began.

The boy, confident, began to play the batters. He put two strikes on the first Monroe lad to come to the plate. Then came a ball. Dutton, full of confidence, signalled for a high one, hoping to catch the batter—but the ball was too high. Then he called for a straight one on the inside.

The pitcher was a beauty for the purpose, but it was a shade too far in, and when the batsman let it go, the umpire said, "Ball three!"

"He's going up, up, up," howled Monroe.

The next pitch was wide. The boy at the plate ran down to first. "Here's where we start," he said to Cross.

The first-baseman was worried. But Danny called cheerily:

"All right, Jerry. We'll get him for you."

The next boy laid down a bunt. Dutton elected

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to throw to second, but the ball got there too late.

"Nobody out!" howled the coaches.

"Here's where we start," shrieked the stands.

A big, lumbering boy was at the plate. Jerome used his cross-fire. The boy swung vainly.

"Good boy!" cried Dutton.

The next pitch was fouled over the grandstand.

"Two strikes!" called Dutton. "Now he's in the hole, Jerry."

Jerome would not fool with his batter. Oh, no. Things were getting serious. He pitched another cross-fire. It was one of his best, starting well in and swinging out sharply.

The batter lunged wildly. Dutton started to cry "Ha, ha! He's gone!" But the tip of the bat met the ball. The ball shot into the air with a vicious curve. It went six feet above Cross's head, struck just within the foul line, and twisted and rolled off at right angles. Farrell did his best, but the ball was rolling away from him, and he recovered it close to the little low fence that ran parallel with the bleachers.

The Monroe stands were cheering. The run-

ner on second had hesitated a little, fearing that Cross might capture the hit. As he saw it shoot over the first-baseman's head he dug his spikes into the dirt. The coach at third waved him home.

But now Farrell had the ball. He tried to throw to the plate, but his attempt was too greatly hurried. The leather struck the diamond and bounded high over Dutton's head.

"Wow!" yelled Monroe. "Come on, everybody."

The boy who had been on first also ran for home. Talmage had backed up Dutton, and now he had the ball. But though his throw was true, it came too late. And then, too, Dutton in trying to tag the runner knocked the leather out of his own hands.

"Third!" Danny yelled.

Lee was waiting for the ball. He dug it at the boy whose hit had caused all this trouble. But the boy was already on the bag.

Nobody out, two runs in, and a man on third! Manor Hall was thoroughly shaken up. Lee

tossed the ball to Danny. The captain walked in to Jerome.

"Tough luck," he said. "He almost missed that ball, and should have struck out. Keep up the way you're going. You'll be all right."

"I'll stick," said Jerome grimly.

The Green and White stands were in gloom. Monroe supporters were jumping up and down in their seats. and waving their flags, and having a high old time generally.

"We want more runs!" they chanted.

But Jerome wasn't in the mood to surrender another inch. He had a feeling that every boy there in the field behind him was wondering whether he'd pull through. He shut his teeth and put all he had on the ball. The next boy struck out, and the Green and White stands began to take renewed interest in the game.

The next batter fouled to Dutton. Things began to look decidedly better.

But a runner was still on third. Jerome came back with his cross-fire. The batter swung. The ball dribbled along the base line to Cross, and

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Cross jumped on the bag with both feet so that there would be no mistake that he had touched the canvas.

Manor's cheer shrilled across the field. The stands gave Jerome a small-sized ovation. He had crawled out of a very bad hole. As he sat down on the bench Craig tapped him with the score-book.

"Great work, son."

Jerome smiled. He hadn't felt like smiling out there a few moments ago, but now the danger was past. The score was 2 to 1 in Monroe's favor.

Three more innings passed. Jerome continued to pitch with the smoothness of a machine. Not a hit was made off him.

But Maxim's pitching was almost as good. Twice Manor Hall got runners as far as third. On these occasions, however, Monroe was alive to the dangers of a steal, and the hits that would score the runs did not come.

Then came the last of the seventh. With one down, the dependable Farrell hit between center

and left. He turned first, turned second, and ran on to third. Danny flashed his hand to the coach. He had little confidence that Dutton or Jerome would hit. He signalled to send Farrell home.

So Farrell raced for the plate. He would have made it had not the fielder's throw been a beauty. The ball struck well out, bounded twice, and came low to the catcher. Farrell slid into the ball.

"Out!" said the umpire.

A chance for a run was gone. Danny thought sadly that Marty and some of the others would say he had blundered, but he thought he had done the right thing under all the conditions.

Dutton drew a base on balls.

Danny dropped a hand on Jerome's shoulder. "Here's your chance to tie your own game," he said. "Let the first one go. I'll send Dutton down on the first pitch."

Dutton was not fast, but things were now desperate for the Green and White. Luckily the catcher juggled the ball when it came to him, with the result that Dutton reached the midway

base in safety. The stands began to clamor for a hit.

Jerome was weak with the stick. However, he managed to scratch a fluky single past third base. Dutton sprinted in with the tying run. On the throw to the plate Jerome went down to second.

The Green and White stands yelled madly. Danny, himself, was on fire with excitement. Craig smiled quietly.

The head of the batting list was up. Cross walked out swinging a heavy club.

"Take the first good one," Danny ordered. He felt that Maxim was weakening. In this he was right. Cross laced the first pitch over second, and Jerome trotted in and did not even have to slide. Cross was held at first.

Again Danny took a chance. He sent Cross down to steal. But this time the catcher did not juggle. Cross was thrown out. The beginning of the eighth dawned, with the score 3 to 2 in Manor's favor. Danny felt that he wanted to get out and dance. He felt much more cheerful than

during the tedious innings when the score had been 2 to 1 against him.

"Two more innings," he called to Jerome. "You've got them."

"They won't hit me," said the pitcher.

They didn't. But now Maxim had recovered and Manor was also blanked. The ninth inning started.

Here was Monroe's last chance. The stands were cheering and singing and calling excited commands. Staid old gentlemen tugged at their collars and absent-mindedly crushed in their hats.

The first batter lifted what was apparently an easy fly just over shortstop's head. Lee ran back to get it, and Chapman, the left-fielder, came in with the same purpose in mind.

"Mine, mine," Chapman shouted.

Lee did not hear him. Danny called a warning, but was too late. The boys came together, and the ball fell safe between them. Neither was seriously hurt, but the accident was a shock to the nine. Here was a runner on the paths who had no business there. Was Monroe's luck returning?

The next boy grounded to Lee.

"Double play," called Danny.

Lee threw to the captain. But Danny, in his haste to hurry the leather to Cross, dropped the ball and both men were safe. The Monroe stands sang deliriously.

"My fault," cried Danny. "We'll get the next one, Jerry."

But, for the first time that day, Jerome was upset. Danny had been such a source of strength to him, that it robbed him of some of the courage to see the captain fail in the pinch. Before he knew it he had three balls and no strikes on the third batter. He pulled himself together and tried not to hear Monroe's exultant cries. But after getting over one strike, he slipped in a wide pitch. The bases were full, and nobody was out.

"Take him out, take him out," Monroe cried joyously, and, in truth, some of Manor's fellows cried the same thing. Marty Black called over to King, "There he goes." But King turned his back. King was white through and through.

The infield gathered around Jerome. They

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knew he was shaken. They wanted to give him time to steady himself. He kept twisting one foot in the pitcher's plate. Finally he swallowed hard.

"I'm all right now," he said.

"We're with you," called Danny. The fielders scurried back to their places.

Just above the knees Jerome began to stick the ball. Strike one! Strike two! The Manor stands took heart. They started their cheer:

Watch them fight! Watch them fight!

Watch them fight!

Green and White! Green and White!

Green and——

"Strike three!" called the umpire.

The cheer was lost in a shout of joy. Jerome, on the mound, pulled down his cap firmly.

The next boy fouled to Cross. None of the runners dared try to advance.

"Only one more," cried Danny. "Just one more, Jerry."

This time the batter hit directly to the pitcher. Jerome took the ball on the first bound. All he

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had to do was to throw to first base and the game was over and the Green and White had won. Men in the stands started to leave their seats.

And suddenly a roar made them turn around. Cross, in some strange way, had dropped the ball. The runner was safe. The tying run was in. There were still three on the bases.

Here was the chance for Monroe to pound the ball all over the field. The Green and White was groggy from this latest freak of fortune. Monroe's players shouted from the bench. Her runners became intoxicated with the excitement of their golden chances. The players on both sides seemed to have gone suddenly mad.

Not Cross, however. He had not lost his head when he made his error. He tucked the ball under his arm. Only the umpire noticed what he did. And a moment later when the boy whose weak splash had helped tie up the game stepped off the bag, Cross thumped him with the leather.

"Out!" said the umpire wearily. Why, he wondered, did players continue to fall victims to the hidden ball trick?

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Cross rolled the sphere toward the mound. He ran to Jerome and dropped an arm across his shoulder. He didn't say a word. He didn't have to. Jerry understood.

There was a battle-scarred grimness on the bench as the last half of the inning started. Craig had not said a word of complaint to Cross. The first-baseman thought bitterly that it was generally the fellow who was most anxious to win who lost.

Chapman was first up. Danny, with his eyes on Maxim, considered. Had Maxim's nerves jumped with his team-mate's during that rally? If so, had Maxim's nerves yet steadied?

"Wait him out," said the captain; "wait him out, Chap. Take two strikes before you swing."

Danny's guess was good. Maxim pitched two bad balls. Then, though he managed to work in a strike, he lost control and missed the plate with two more attempts. Chapman trotted down to first.

Danny wanted just one run. He came to bat and longed to whale at the ball and try to drive it out of the lots, but that was not good general-

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ship. He bunted, and though he was thrown out, Chapman was on second. A hit would win the game.

Baggs came to bat. He was the heaviest hitter of the nine, and a cheer sounded for him. Here, thought the stands, was the place to settle this old ball game. But Baggs was for once too anxious. He started after bad balls, and Danny, whose hopes were high, sighed. He was not surprised when Baggs came back to the bench a strikeout victim. Baggs looked as though he wanted to cry.

It was Talmage's turn. Danny pleaded with him for a hit. Talmage dumped the ball over the third-baseman's head. The stands roared, and then suddenly became silent. For the hit was too short for Chapman to try to score. This game was still undecided.

It was now Lee's turn. He had been shaken by that tumble. Perhaps Maxim would think that he was still shaken. Perhaps Maxim would try to work a fast strike right at the start. Danny called back the shortstop.

"How are you feeling, shaky?"

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"My head's clear."

"Then watch for that first pitch. I think it will be right over. Kill it, Lee; kill it."

Lee gripped his bat and went out.

And that first ball was just what the captain expected. Just above the waist it came, hard and fast and true. Lee put his shoulders into the swing.

The stands saw the short-stop jump. He missed the ball. And then, while the happy Lee scooted to first, and while Chapman thundered in with a run, the stands spilled themselves out on the field. It was victory for the Green and White.

Soberly amid the riot and rejoicing, the nine returned to the locker room. At one stage of the season they had been beaten. Yet to-day they had won their championship. They started to tell Danny that the credit was his, and they were still telling him when Marty Black walked into the locker room.

"Congratulations, Cap," he said. He nodded across the room. "Hello, Craig. Good game."

"Great game," said the coach.

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"I thought the boys would be chased all over the lot," Marty confessed. "Great boy, this Cap here. I can't make head or tail of him. He upsets every rule and gets away with it. He's too much for me."

Craig smiled wisely.

"I wish I knew how he did it," sighed Marty. "If I could do things that way, I'd be managing a big league team. He picks pitchers that nobody else would pick and they win for him. Great boy. Well, we'll shake hands, Cap, won't we?"

"Of course we will," said Danny.

Marty collected a few belongings and for the last time left the locker room. He was still shaking his head as he went through the door as though Manor's victory became stranger to him the more he thought of it.

Back there in the room Farrell banged on the floor with the cleats of his shoes. He wanted a cheer for Danny. There wasn't noise enough to suit him. He announced that he wanted a cheer for a Manor Hall fellow who was big enough to make Marty Black toe the mark.

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"I don't want a cheer for that," Danny said gravely. "When a boy starts out to override a man he generally gets into trouble. It just happened that I blundered into the right things. I was lucky. And I think right now that we'd have lost that game if it hadn't been for Craig. He came back here and straightened everything out for us."

"Craig, Craig, Craig!" yelled the squad.

"You can thank Marty Black that I was here," said the coach.

A sudden silence fell. Farrell glanced up from where he knelt with his cleats.

"Why?" he asked. Farrell was a very practical chap.

"I told Danny I couldn't withstand the itch to see the last game," Craig said. "That is not strictly true. Marty wrote to me. He said that he wasn't pulling right with the squad, and that either you didn't understand him or he didn't understand you. He asked me to come back."

"Marty did that?" Farrell asked incredulously.

"Marty did that," Craig repeated.

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There was a rush for the windows. Marty was crossing the road toward the Yard. A hurricane of cheers reached his ears. He turned about, stood there for a moment smiling, and then waved his hand toward the boys in the windows.

"Some queer eels," he said. "Fight with me last night and cheer me this afternoon."

He was more puzzled a month later when a small silver cup came to him. The cup stood on a dainty mahogany stand, and on its surface was engraved:

TO THE MAN WHO BEAT MONROE FROM CAP
--

Danny showed the cup to Craig before he sent it away. Craig held it a little while in silence, and finally put it back in its case.

"You're going up to Yale, aren't you?" he asked.

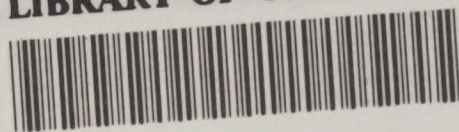
"I am," said Danny.

Craig smiled softly. "Yale," he said, "is getting a mighty good man." (1)

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